Kitab Mahal Series of English Literature No. 22

SHELLEY'S SELECTED POEMS

Introduction, Text, Meanings, & Explanations, Paraphrase, Questions & Answers

By

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Urdu Bazar, LAHORE
(W. PAKISTAN)

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Price

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PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792-1822)

Life and Works :

Shelley was born on August 4, 1792, at Field Place, Warnham, Sussex. His father, Timothy Shelley, was a wealthy landowner who later succeeded to a baronetsy. After some schooling at Isleworth, Shelley was sent in 1804 to Eton. At Eton he was known as "Mad Shelley" and "Shelley the Atheist" for his hatred of discipline and erratic enthusiasms and tempers, but he had naturally a gentle disposition. His earliest attempts at writing were two lurid romances—*Zastrozzi* (1808) and *St. Irvyne* (1810), in imitation of the style of Mrs. Anne Radcliffe and the "School of Terror." At University College, Oxford, where he went in 1810, he made friends with T. J. Hogg, who suggested the title for his first, and rather feeble, volume of verse, *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson* (1812). Shelley and Hogg, enthusiastic in everything they did or thought, developed from religious sceptics into non-compromising atheists, and the publication of Shelley's pamphlet. *The Necessity of Atheism*, in 1811, led to his expulsion from the University.

In disgrace with his father, Shelley went to London lodgings in Soho, and subsisted on an allowance from his sisters. Here he made the acquaintance of Harriet Westbrook. Harriet Westbrook was soon in love with him, and unhappy at home she drew deepest sympathy from the excitable Shelley. At last they eloped and contracted the proper form of marriage at Edinburgh in September, 1811. Shelley maintained that marriage should be a purely voluntary relation terminable at will by either party.

During the next two years they shifted from place to place. Having been given an allowance by their respective parents, they lived first at York, then in succession at Keswick, where Southey was also living in Dublin in 1812, where he delivered speeches and circulated his

Address to het Irish People, supporting the cause of Catholic ema ncipation and the repeal of the Union : when he lived in Wnales, he was attacked by an "assassin", a shephered, who angered at Shelley's humanitarian efforts to procure the killing of dying or diseased sheep, fired at him to frighten him ; in Cornwall his servant got into trouble for circulating copies of Shelley's pamphlet, *Declaration of Rights*, which was deemed inflammatory and seditious.

During this period Shelley published his first notable work in verse, *Queen Mab*, and as it contained violent attacks on conventional morals and religion, it had to be privately printed in 1813. Shelley's wife, deeply in love with him, and intelligent and well-read, did her best to follow his enthusiasms and the trend of his ideals ; but she could not share them, and by the spring of 1814 their relations had become strained. While she paid a long visit to Bath, he spent most of his time in the house of the revolutionary William Godwin from whom he seemed to have learned much. There he fell in love with Godwin's daughter by his first wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, and despite the pleas of his wife, he eloped with her to Switzerland in July, 1814. They returned to London in September, and shortly afterwards by the death of his grandfather, Shelley became heir to a large estate, and was able to bargain with his father for an income of £ 1,000 a year. True to his unconventional outlook, he proposed to Harriet that she should come and live with him and her supplanter ; the offer was refused. He lived for a year at Bishopsgate, then near Windsor Forest, where his poem, *Alaster or The Spirit of Solitude*, was written, and where he became friendly with Thomas Love Peacock.

In 1818 Shelley, with Mary and her step-sister, Claire Calairmont, went to Geneva ; and here they became close friends with Byron, and Claire became Byron's mistress. The suicide of Harriet in November, 1816, marked the final tragic climax of his marriage ; it was due more to a subsequent unhappy love affair and to ill-treatment by her family, than to Shelley's desertion of her. The death of Harriet deeply affected Shelley. In the following month

he married Mary, and in the following year he showed further proof of his maturing genius in the uneven but often magnificent poem. *The Revolt of Islam*, originally called *Laon and Cythna*. The friendship of Leigh Hunt, editor of the *Examiner*, did something to win recognition for his verse.

A lawsuit, as the result of which Shelley was deprived of the custody of Harriet's children, was followed by a long illness, which made him decided to live in Italy. He left England in March, 1818, and never returned. His life in Italy was uneventful. As before, he moved from place to place, finally settling at the Casa Magni, on the gulf of Spezia. At Pisa and at Ravenna he saw much of Byron, whose character and poetry fascinated, even while they repelled him. A passing infatuation for the Contessina Emilia Viviani inspired the lovely poem *Epipsychidion* : and the friendship of the Greek patriot, Prince Alexander Mavrocordato, led to his drama *Hellas*, filled with the magnificent rhetoric of optimisticidealism. These, and also the famous lament for the death of Keats, *Adonais*, and the grim, noble tragedy of the *Cenci* (1819), must yield pride of place to his masterpiece, *Prometheus Unbound*, published in 1819. In *Prometheus Unbound* Shelley expounds and clarifies his philosophy. Prometheus stands for mankind. Jupiter typifies the anthropomorphic god of religion, and to Jupiter Prometheus voluntarily enslaves himself ; when the chains of his slavery are broken, he can be free to advance, hand in hand with Nature, on the path of limitless progression. The beauty of the verse, the richness of imagination with which the tale is told, and the inspiration with which the whole is sustained, make of *Prometheus Unbound* one of the masterpieces of English literature.

The Witch of Atlas, perfect in form but less ambitious in scope, was published in 1820. The last period of his life was certainly the happiest ; he had found his ideal companion in Mary Wollstonecraft, and in Italy had less occasion frequently to shock the lovers of convention. His death was tragic : he was drowned on July 8, 1822, while returning by boat to the Casa Magin from Lgheorn, where

he had been welcoming Leigh Hunt to Italy. His body was washed up on the shore and was burnt, his ashes being buried in the Protestant cemetery in Rome.

In his more ambitious works, which also included *Rosalind and Helen* (1818), and *Julian and Maddalo* (1819). Shelley combined supreme lyrical gifts with intellectual passion. Byron preached liberty, but his approach was purely emotional ; Wordsworth was a thinker, but he lacked passion. Shelley combined passion with intellect, and in *Prometheus Unbound* he held a perfect balance between the two. He was an iconoclast, but he was an innovator as well ; and the ideals he preached were inspired by love of beauty and a passion for good. In his combination of speculative keenness and love of humanity he stands alone. He preached the necessity for a new order of things, and he believed that it was attainable ; and the main importance of his property is that it has inspired later generations, and will continue to inspire them, to seek a new order also, and in the same belief.

Estimate of his Character : Personality and Views :

Shelley ordered his life entirely by rules of his own making ; he had no right to complain if his actions were viewed with active dislike and often quite genuine horror. Nor did he complain. Though the attacks of the world never caused him to modify his conduct or point of view, he never allowed them to make him sour or bitter. Volatile, impassioned, by all normal standards, presumptuous and heedless of others, he yet possessed an innate beauty and greatness of character that lifts him far above the normal railers against the established order of things. Hs believed passionately in what he preached, and he wae quite fearless in preaching it. In his own day it was perhaps inevitable that the destructiveness of his doctrines should overshadow everything else, but posterity has realized that Shelley was inspired by a vital, possibly impracticable, but beautiful philosophy of life. He was an idealist who refused all compromises with the world as he knew it, and many of the things which the world regarded

as truths were to him falsehoods. His desertion of his first wife to all appearances was an act of cruelty and selfishness, but Shelley was a rare exception to those who use contempt for the marriage tie as an excuse for avoiding an obligation. To have denied himself his love for Mary Wollstonecraft would have been to deny what he considered one of the true principles of existence ; and if concrete proofs are needed that he was not selfish, countless examples can be given of his indulgence, generosity and love of humanity.

Shelley possessed a radiant faith in the possibility of perfection, which led him to unmeasured, unbalanced attacks on the institutions and prejudices surrounding him, which seemed to him be to retarding the attainment thereof. In his own life time the value of his poetrical ideals was obscured by the excess of his conduct, by his flouting of all conventions. Posterity has been able to discount the excesses, and to realize the power and beauty of his verse. —*J. A. Hammerton.*

That man could be so perfectionised as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system. And the subject he loved best to dwell on was the image of one warring with Evil Principle, oppressed not only by it but by all—the good, who were deluded into considering evil a necessary portion of humanity.—*Marry Wollstonecraft Shelley.*

Just as behind his radiant imagination there was a stern intellectual background, so behind all his fantasies and apparent whimsies was the single unswerving purpose of the man of action.—*Humbert Wolfe.*

Shelley and his age : Social and Political background :

In the case of most great writers we are more interested in their literary output than in their character, personality, or indiosyncrasies, if any, unless they have a direct bearing upon what they write. It is different with Shelley. As long as he lived, he was passionately hated and feared, loved and adored. Even now when he is recognized as a

classic, critics and readers sometimes get shocked either by his sayings or doings here and there, and cannot wholly reconcile themselves to his supreme gift of poetry. Those who love him, hail him as a fighter for the liberation of humanity—the "banner of freedom" in whose hand,

> Torn but flying,
> Streams like a thunder-cloud against the wind.

He has been painted as a saintly and superhuman creature, and therefore he is one, not to be judged by the common standard of morality. His life has been invested with delicate pathos. There is, however, no denying that he is one of the most engaging personalities that ever lived. Some may still doubt whether his hysterical revulsions of feeling, his lack of balance, his impulsive and reckless doings should not be set down to partial insanity. Yet he was loved and esteemed by some of his contemporaries—those with whom he had come in contact; and they all differed from him in tastes and temperament. Byron who could be interested in nobody else than in himself, and could not stand the pretensions of a poet, was drawn to him; Peacock who looked askance at any form of enthusiasm, admired him; Hogg who was a Tory eccentric, found points of affinity with him.

Shelley was a spirit that seemed to have been loved. And the reason is that he was perfectly sincere without any thought of self, and had the instinct of universal benevolence. One of his letters ends with the following words: "Affectionate love to and from all. This ought to be not only the *vale* of a letter, but a superscription over the gate of life—" these words may be taken as the keynote to his life and his longings. We can understand why he is still loved, and has so often been idealized. He is one of the most subjective of writers. His poetry ranges through a realm of fantasy, rarely descending to the man of flesh and blood. Free from all taint of representation of the real, it seems some "chorus hymeneal, or triumphant chant."—"a thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want." His poetry is rather an echo or emanation of his own spirit. In his verse there is the pulsation of the emo-

tion of love for his fell ow-men. The instinct of universal benevolence which is as the basic of his being, wings the flight of his poesy. Living in a world of his own fantasies' he had little real knowledge of men and women, and his benevolence often took a wrong turn. His love for a person was often capricious and incalculable. It is the impression of an unearthly creature, that is conveyed to us by his life and by his poetry.

Shelley appeared on the scene when the Romantic movement in English literature had run its course. It was the time, again, when after a series of successful wars England had attained the position of a great Power. Yet it was one of the gloomiest periods in the history of England. The Industrial Revolution which began at the end of the eighteenth century, converted a nation of peasants and traders into a nation of manufacturers. Materialism (which in the philosophical sense was the marked characteristic of the previous century), in the sense of profit-hunting and exploiting the poorer classes. got hold of a section, and Wordsworth writes :

> The world is too much with us ; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.
> Little we see in Nature that is ours :
> We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon !

Politically the period was one of blackest reaction. The Napoleonic wars had not affected England adversely. While on the continent memories of democratic advance were not totally blotted out, in England the aristocratic families which had been ruling since the time of Anne, strengthened their hold upon the nation. Their despotism crushed the humble, and drove the high-spirited to revolt. This explains why such poets as Byron, Shelley and Landor, though by birth and fortune members of the ruling class, were rebels. The atmosphere of England was stifling for them, and they lived abroad in exile.

George Brandes summed up the spirit of the time by saying that England was pre-eminently the home of cant. In the political world there were oppression and exploitation rampant ; in morals and religion, hypocrisy and

persecution ruled. England supported the Holy Alliance which re-established the reactionary regime everywhere in Europe—a treaty concluded at Paris in 1815, after the final abdication of Napoleon, by Alexander I of Russia. Francis II of Austria, and Frederick William III of Prussia. It was the instrument for suppressing all movements for freedom. The prolonged war worsened the economic condition in England ; workers lost their jobs, and taxation pressed heavily on the poor. There was panic in the landed class, which had fattened on high rents and high prices of corn. Republican principles were the scare even of many honest and sensible men, who recalled the Terror in Paris ; they might have been otherwise reformers, but they rallied round coercion and Toryism. The elder generation of poets had been republicans in their youth. Wordsworth hailed the French Revolution :

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very heaven !

Coleridge and Southey planned to found a "pantisocracy" —a communistric society on the banks of the Susquehanna —a project that fell through for want of funds, and also because the two projectors fell in love simultaneously with two sisters. Sarah and Edith Fricker. All the three now pledged themselves to defend order and property and gave unswerving allegiance to Church and Throne and Constitution. Taking up their abode in the Lakes, Southey and Wordsworth sang the praises of the royal family and celebrated England as the home of freedom. Thomson wrote : "Rule, Britannia", proclaiming that Britons could never be slaves to a foreigner, but they, except those who were gentlemen, were already slaves to "a home-grown tyranny more blighting, because more stupid, than that of Napoleon," The Irish rebellion of 1798 was stamped out in blood, and Ireland was forced by fraud into the Union of 1800, and her industry and commerce were strangled. The Parliamentary franchise was restricted to a million out of a population of thirty millions, and most of the seats in House of Commons were reserved to the rich.

"Representative government did not exist ; whoever

agitated for some measures of it was deported to Australia or forced to fly to America. Glasgow and Manchester weavers starved and rioted. The press was gagged and the Habeas Corpus Act constantly suspended. A second rebellion in Ireland, when Castlereagh "dabbled his sleek young hands in Erin's gore" was suppressed with unusual ferocity. In England in 1812 famine drove hundreds of poor people to wander and pillage. Under the criminal law, still of medieval cruelty, death was the punishment for the theft of a loaf or a sheep. The social organism had come to a deadlock—on the one hand a starved and angry populace, on the other a vast Church-and-King party, impregnably powerful, made up of all who had "a stake in the country." The strain was not to be relieved until the Reform Act of 1832 set the wheels in motion again; they then moved painfully indeed, but still they moved. Meanwhile Parliament was the stronghold of selfish interests; the Church was the jackal of the gentry; George III, who lost the American colonies and maintained negro slavery, was on the throne, until he went mad and was succeeded by his profligate son."

The impressionable and sensitive nature of Shelley, with his generous impulses, was pained and moved to indignation at the sight of misery and distress, and unfreedom. In response to the passionate yearning of his heart he naturally broke into paeans of liberty. He was simply swept away by enthusiasm, but had no practicable schemes for the liberation of humanity. Let it be admitted that he wrestled in spirit to win universal freedom for mankind, and pined in longing for it. The inmost pathos of his poetry consists in nothing else then in it. He said of himself:

> A never o'er which do creep
> The else unfelt oppressions of this earth.

If the others were less conscious of their misery, he bore its full weight in his spirit, and his heart wailed for them. This is the tragedy of Shelley's life. Sometimes he lashed out the oppressors in England: thus he satirizes Sidmouth Home Secretary, and Castlereagh, Foreign Secretary:

As a shark and dog-fish wait
Under an Atlantic isle,
For the negro ship, whose freight
Is the theme of their debate,
Wrinkling their red gills the while—
Are ye, two vultures sick for battle,
Two scorpions under one wet stone,
Two bloodless wolves whose dry throats rattle,
Two crows perched on the murrained cattle,
Two vipers tangled into one.

Unlike Byron, Shelley rarely indulged in such satirical vein. We may also refer to *The Masque of Anarchy*, called forth of the "Peterloo Massacre" at Manchestor on August 16, 1819, when a peaceable meeting held in support of Parliamentary reform was broken up by the hussars, who killed six people and wounded seventy others. Shelley's indignation burst forth in terrific stanzas, remarkable in their stark simplicity of expression :

I met murder/on the way—
He had a mask like Castlereagh –
Very smooth he looked, yet grim :
Seven blood-hounds followed him.

We may compare also his great sonnet, *England* (1819)—

An old, mad, blind, despised and dying king,
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn,—mud from a muddy spring.

The verse is instinct with a militant republican spirit. In his Aristophanic drama of *Swillfoot the Tyrant* (1820) he pictures the men of England as starving pigs content to lap up such diluted hog's, wash as their tyrants the priests, and the soldiers will allow them. In this drama he glances at the differences between the Regent (who ascended the throne as George IV) and his wife, Caroline of Brunswick, which caused a good deal of excitement at the time he became king. Caroline after having left her husband roamed in Europe with a paromour ; returned to claim her position as Queen at her husband's accession to the throne. The divorce that followed, was symptomatic of the rot that had set in the moral life of England.

"Shelley felt that sort of disgust which makes a man rave and curse under the attacks of some loathsome disease; if he laughs, it is the laugh of frenzy".

The Congress of Vienna (1814-16) re-established the old order of things. The legitimate rulers were restored, and Europe was parcelled out in total disregard of national aspirations. Revolutions broke out, and constitutional governments were set up in Spain and Naples. In his poems—*Ode to Liberty* and *Ode to Naples* Shelley hailed the rise of movement for freedom in fragments of Europe, and sounded the note of prophecy that remained unfulfilled, however. His hopes and aspirations for the freedom, which rang out in his verse, could have but little effect on the course of events.

"Byron's jingles could change the face of the world, while all Shelley's pure and lofty aspirations left no mark on history. And so it was, not with his republican ardours alone but with all he undertook. Nothing he did influenced his contemporaries outside his immediate circle; the public only noticed him to execrate the atheist, the fiend, and the monster. He felt that "his name was writ in water", and languished for want of recognition. His life, a lightning-flash across the storm-cloud of the age was a brief but crowded record of mistakes and disasters, the classical example of the rule that genius is infinite capacity for getting into trouble."

Shelley's Poetry and its Characteristics:

The most noted characteristics of Shelley's poetic style are a wealth of imagery and unfailing melody. Alice Meynell remarks that it is the poetry of imagery, which to the young minds may seem the poetry of all poetry. Meynell may think that the poetry of imagery is not necessarily 'transcendentally great', but this cannot be true. Meynell echoes Matthew Arnold's criticism that Shelley's poetry lacks high seriousness, and confirms the latter's description of Shelley as "a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain." This is but a one-sided view.

The point which is forgotten here is that Shelley is pre-eminently a lyric poet, and that high seriousness goes ill with a lyric poet. As a lyric poet Shelley has a unique and individual style. No one will demur when Meynell says, "The poetry of Shelley is so peculiarly his own that a mere fragment of a line, even though unknown to the hearer, might be recognized as his. The ear recognizes it, as well as the understanding, for the modulation is all his; so, in many respects, is the diction; and the very word "Shelley", because it is his name, takes the character of his poetry".

The cast of his thoughts may not always be understandable to the ordinary reader—and may not even be appreciated by him, but the rhythm and cadence of his lines, the dreamy character of his imagery, the opalescent outline of his landscape-painting are clearly individual.

To take his imagery first :

(1) *The rapid succession of images and the unending vista* which is often revealed, seems sometimes to distract the reader's attention from the drift of thought or argument. The result is that mere images and their beauty and variety satisfy the reader's poetic sense. His *Epipsychidion* may be regarded as a string of beautiful similes and images. Perhaps in the following lines of the poem we may find the keynote to his method of composition :

I measure
The world of fancies, seeking one like thee,
And find also mine own infirmity.

As a matter of fact, the sole appeal of his poetry lies in the beauty and charming freshness of his imagery, and this means no small endowment of poetic faculty and vision.

(2) *Repetition of images* is quite common in Shelley's poetry. He seeks to exhaust all possible significance of a figure that has pleased his fancy and present it from different angles of vision. So may find the same image in a different context and clothed with new beauty and significance.

(3) *Resumption of images*—Shelley sometimes goes back to and brings together his images. This shows that, however the vision the shape and the outline of thought may change under the huddling multitute of imagery, Shelley does not forget the main stream and direction of thought, and gathers up the images into a final picture and a consistent whole ; as in his *Ode to the West Wind* :

> Oh, lift me up as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !
> I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed !

(4) *Avoidance of definiteness* in descriptions of scenery and landscape. His spirit seems to have a kinship with the ever-changing clouds and shapes of the sky, and to have always brooded over such phenomena : so all that is vague, indefinite and changeable, attracts him.

(5) *Weaving of scientific fact into the texture of his concepts* and *imagery*. Two examples will suffice :

> No sister-flower would be forgiven
> If it disdained its brother
>
> —*Love's Philosophy*.

> The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
> The sapless foliage of the ocean, know
> Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,
> And tremble and despoil themselves ! oh, hear !
>
> —*Ode to the West Wind*.

John Drinkwater writes, "It is often charged against the poetry of Shelley that, while strong in music, it is weak in imagery, in pictorial effect. It is true that Shelley's is a style of glowing colour, not often boldly graphic. Sometimes, indeed, Shelley not only colours but draws also, like a master ; as in the noble picture of the Hours in the Prometheus—the wild-eyed charioteers, with bright hair streaming, leaning forward in their ears to lash their rainbow-winged and flying seeds. Sometimes also, he has a little passing piece of imagery such as this :

> Two sister-antelopes
> By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
> Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream—

A little picture, half painted, half suggested, of an indescribable witchery of effect. As a rule, however, Shelley

cares less for definite imagery than for effects of light and colour : effects varying through all the scale, from scenes of vast dim tracts "robed in the lustrous glooms of leaden-coloured even"-- from wild waves lighted awfully :

> By the last glare of day's red agony,
> Which from a rent among the fiery clouds
> Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep—

down to the light-dissolving star-showers of soft-breaking seas, or the green and golden fire of glow-worms gleaming at twilight from the bells of lilies.

But what chiefly separates Shelley's pictures from those of other people is his amazingly fine sense of tenderness of colour. There is nothing to equal his work in this respect ; nothing that glows like it yet is so delicate. Some of his effects stand quite apart—alone in their great beauty. Take the description of the mystic shell which Proteus gave to Asia :

> See the pale azure fading into silver,
> Lying in it with a soft yet glowing light ;
> Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there ?

The secret of his sort of colouring, so rich, yet so ethereal, belong to Shelley alone, among the poets of the world.

As to Shelley's music, there is little need to speak. From every line we have been reading, it comes thrilling out, cellestial as an angel's. For those whose spirit is attuned to hear it, comment is superfluous, and for others, idle. Who can "explain" a melody of Chopin to a man who has no ear ?"

Development of Shelley's Poetic Power :

A brief review of Shelley's poems from those written earlier down to the later productions, will show that there was a gradual growth and development in his aristic power. His earliest serious work, *Queen Mab* (1813), is neither very original nor promising except for occasional bursts of poetry. It is imitative so far as it follows the pseudo-orientalism of Southey. The really Shelleyan part

of the poem is his outcry against the forces of gold, materialism and superstition; and here again Shelley preaches Godwinsim. His next poem, *Alastor* (1816), is more individual and strikes the true Shelleyan note. In this poem we have the portrait of a self-tormented youth whose quest and mission cost his life. Apart from the description of Alpine scenery, in whose loveliness and grandeur Shelley seems to have steeped himself, much of the questioning and seeking a principle of unity in life, that occupied the youth, is Shelley's own. Of course echoes of Wordsworth's lines and thought are found in the poem; yet the difference between the two, so far as the description of landscape and scenery and the ethical or psychological spirit of the poem are concerned, is well-marked. Considerable advance is shown too in the manipulation of blank verse; it is "entirely Shelleyan in its ethereal colouring and dreamy cadences." Then follow the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* and *Mont Blanc*. In the former there is a clear statement of Shelley's creed; in the latter it is Alpine scenery again, sketched in austere outline and with an imagination sensitive to the shifting colours of mountain scenery.

The *Revolt of Islam* (1818) is rather a polemical poem. Passion for freedom and passion for beauty are blended into one note, but the drift of thought is sometimes obscure. It is no doubt characterized by Shelley's lambent imagination and also by melody of diction, but it is unsatisfying as a work of ideas. Further the choice of the Spenserian stanza seems to be unfortunate *Rosalind and Helen* (1819) is full of the echoes of the troublous times, but the most interesting part is concerned with the laying down of his favourite doctrine on marriage.

His later work bears fruits of his mature genius. He is now permanently settled in Italy, and the sunshine and landscape of Italy must have mellowed and enriched his genius. As Herford writes, "The cast of his imagination had a natural affinity to Italian landscape, and found stimulus in the continual neighbourhood in the actual world of visions long familiar. The indefinable enchantment of Italy brought a throng of new inspirations.

the southern land, too, the poetry of Greece became more vital for him; and Aeschylus and Plato were continual companions, whose converse was the very woof out of which he wrought. The four years fall conveniently into four sub-divisions, covering the periods spent respectively at Venice and Naples (Spring, 1818, to Spring, 1819), at Rome (April, 1819), to (January, 1820), at Pisa (January, 1820 to April, 1822) and at Lerici (April to July, 1822). The first culminates in the *Julian and Maddalo*; the second in the dramas, *Prometheus Unbound* and the *Cenci*; the third in the lyrics of natural beauty and personal emotions, *Cloud* and *Skylark*, *Adnoais* and *Epipsychidion*: the fourth in the magnificent, fragmentary *Triumph of Life*."

The picture of Byron, a study by a companion poet, in *Julian and Meddalo* (1818) is arresting. The style of the poem is an interesting development marking as it does, "a manner happily mediating between the abstract intensity of Shelley's ordinary verse and the rich concrete talk of Byron, under the 'intoxication' of which it arose." The *Lines Written among the Euganean Hills* has a note of passionate inwardness, and in the poem personal hope and despair are presented in lines of penetrating beauty and sheer melody of sound.

Prometheus Unbound (1818-19) is an ambitious work which his superb and all-sweeping imagination executes with astonishing success. His enthusiasm for freedom and emancipation of humanity, of whom Prometheus is the protagonist, thrills every line of the poem. As Shelley himself writes, "The bright blue sky of Rome and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate and the new life with which it dominates the spirits even to intoxication were the inspiration of this drama." But the most delightful part of the poem is the abundant infusion of lyrics---lyrics of intensity of feeling and simple phrasing.

So far as Shelley's theories and speculations are concerned they are coloured by Godwinism. The dramatic interest of the poem has not seldom been maintained. But the *Cenci* achieves real tragic interest. The story of

Beatrice Cenci deeply stirs Shelley's sympathy for heroism and suffering womanhood. The drama has something of the austerity of Aeschylus, for "without ever becoming abstract or shadowy, he yet lifts his gross materials persistently into the region in which pity and terror purify."

Then follow his political poems which include *The Masque of Anarchy*, *Peter Bell the Third*, and *Swellfoot the Tyrant*. These poems do not represent Shelley properly. His lyric genius seems to have been cramped and warned within the bounds of such verse. His residence at Pisa from 1820 to 1822 has more satisfying things to show. As Herford notes, *The Cloud*, *The Skylark*, *The West Wind*, *Arethusa*, *The Witch of Atlas*, *The Sensitive Plant*—carry on in detached strains of even richer beauty the elemental symphonier of the *Prometheous*. His mastery of form was now complete. Plastic definiteness and delicacy of contour were added to his subtle opalescence of colouring : clear and thrilling melodies, yet full of waywardness and witchery, replaced his often vague and impalpable music. Nowhere-else can we study so effectively then the peculiar stamp of Shelley's imagination as in these marvels of 'poet's' poetry. Where Wordsworth's imagination isolates and focusses, and Keat's fills and enriches, Shelley's dissolves and transcend. His revolutionary impatience of limit in the social world reflects itself in the perpetual opening up of new visions within or through the old; in the 'aerial' 'translucency' and 'inter-transpicuousness' (to use the apt Shelleyan terms) of his pictures."

The political verse that belongs to his second year at Pisa as *Hellas* shows a greater delicacy of imagination and handling, and a rare sensitiveness of his lyric genius. And as compared with his previous political verse, it belongs to a different category altogether. *Hellas* was inspired by the Greek Revolution, and contains some of the most exquisite lyrics of Shelley. Then comes the lyrics, addressed to Mrs. Jane Williams—all marked by a rare delicacy of feeling and sentiment, and by idealization of passion. From *Queen Mab* to these songs of love, so ethereal in music and passion, it is no doubt a great advance. In two sub-divisions of lyric he shows supreme skill—(i) in songs of

descriptive nature with which he sometimes mingles human sentiment; (ii) in songs of love, or personal despair, or languor of desire.

Shelley's Love Poems :

There are scores of short lyrics, expressing the sentiment of love, tender, sometimes fanciful and sometimes full of unsatisfied craving, but always seeking for an ideal consummation of the sentiment. The different types and aspects of love which Shelley ever contemplated. summed up in *Epipsychidion*. To analyse love that Shelley feels, one may say that it is a desire that always remains unsatisfied and that perhaps is never capable of being satisfied. He is in love with an ideal, and ceases be an ideal as soon as it is realized. The note of yearning, coupled with the experience of a calmer happiness, untroubled by passion, which is so exquisitely expressed in the lyric addressed to Mrs. Jane William, marks his real attitude to love. In love he must find something ideal, something ever to aspire after, something ever to look forward to. It is in the non-realization, it is in the expectation of fulfilment that his happiness lies.

There is another feature of his love which needs to be stressed. His feeling is not exactly passionate, but he transforms and transmutes such passion by looking beyond the object of his devotion to a gleam of happiness which is not of the earth. His imagination and his idealizing tendency seek to transcend the actual and common—and supplement more than the demand of ordinary love-making. Secondly, the delicacy and refinement of his feeling tend naturally to invest the passsion of love with a super-sensual purity. As Stopford Brook observes, there are three notes in Shelley's lovepoems—(i) ideal approaches to joyous passions; (ii) ideal regret; and (iii) unmistakable directness of passion, particularly in the poems, addressed to Mrs. Jane Williams.

Stopford Brooke thus sums up Shelley's love—"Love in Shelley's poetry sometimes died into dreams, sometimes likes imagery better than itself. It is troubled with

a philosophy; it seems now and again to be even bored, if I may be allowed the word, by its own ideality. As Shelley soared but rarely into definite pantheism, so he rose but rarely into definite passion, nor does he often care to realise it. It was frequently his deliberate choice to celebrate the love which did not "deal with flesh and blood," and as frequently, when he writes directly of love, he prefers to touch the lip of the cup, but not to drink, lest in the reality he should lose that charm of indefiniteness of ignorance, of pursuit. Of course he was, therefore, fickle."

Shelley, no doubt, makes love the main principle in the universe, and pays his homage to it for its manifestation in beauty—and so love comes to be allied to beauty, and love, as he believes, masks itself in beauty, and this is how he sought to explain the beauty of natural phenomena. And carrying the theory into Plantonic abstraction, he sought the fruition of love in the reunion of the twin souls on earth, though at times he realizes his own mistake in seeking in a mortal woman the image of that which is perfection. Love in the ordinary sense of the word does not certainly satisfy his longing and aspiration to find in love something than a craving of the heart, which is partly sensual and partly spiritual.

If we interpret his feeling in the light of his love-poems, then it will appear that his love is non-fleshly, and often abstract, though all the passionate yearning of desire is there. Love is to Shelley a higher, transcending principle, and so he often talks of self-effacement in connection with it, and of little direct personal relation with the oject of love.

Shelley's Nature-Poems :

Shelley's nature-poem reveal two prominent characteristics—his love of the indefinite, and his love of changefulness. They may have their roots far down in his own nature. In love he always shuns fruition and fulfilment; it is more or less a dream-love, and even the person he loves in etherealized into a lovely dream—and so it will

appear that all that is vague and indefinite, appeals to him. His lavish use of imagery, whether in describing love or the phenomena of nature, is also to be ascribed indirectly to his love of the indefinite and his love of changefulness. Just as he refuses to gaze upon the naked passion of love, so he refuses to portray the beauty of nature as it presents itself directly to the eye, but would prefer to veil the face of nature in a multitude of images.

For these reasons his soul seems to have naturally attracted to the phenomena of the clouds and the sky. Their shifting colours, their changefulness, their dissolving views, he can best embody in lines of superb imaginative beauty and sheer melody. One of his earliest descriptive pieces is his study of sunset : *Queen Mab*. He seems to have carefully observed the phenomenon, and he seems to be an eminent artist in skilful blending of the tones and half-tones of colour. There is more artistic beauty in the description of a storm. We may compare the *Ode to the West Wind*. To his restless spirit the storm seems to have a fascination, and nothing could have been more artistic than the blending of the wall of his spirit with the tempest in the *Ode to the West Wind*.

There is another notable feature of his nature description. As Stopford Brooke observes Shelley had the power of conceiving the life of separate things in nature with astonishing individuality. In this respect he resembles the ancient Greek who could separate the life of the Air from that of the Earth, of the Cloud from that of the Stream, and so on. Shelley who could easily free himself from the prepossessions of modern science and theology, could and did, whenever he pleased, divide and subdivide the life of nature in the same way as an ancient Greek—and that is why one is conscious of an essentially Greek note in many passages of his poetry of nature. There is, however, one point of difference : the ancient Greek would import a human element into nature, but Shelley describes pure nature, without any human association colouring it. We may compare *The Cloud* here.

Similarly Shelley's Spirits of the Earth and Moon are absolutely unstirred by human interest. Again the flowers in *The Sensitive Plant* produce in us a curious feeling; the flowers have a strange aloofness from humanity. One result of such detached observation of natural phenomena is that Shelley achieves almost scientific accuracy and precision in his description of nature—at least he is truer to the actual state of things than any other poet. His dissociation of the human from nature is often startling. We are left rather cold and uninterested by *The Cloud* and by the Spirits of the Earth and the Moon in *Prometheus Unbound*. In *The Skylark*, on the other hand, he blends the human with nature. When he is absorbed in himself, and writes about what is going on within himself in contact with nature, he is more appealing; and it is then that he makes nature the mere image of his own feelings, the creature of his own mood, as in his "life alone doth Nature live." This is essentially the Romantic attitude to nature projecting one's own feelings and sentiments into nature. *Alastor* particularly portrays this attitude; the poet but sees the reflection of his own troubled self and restless spirit in nature.

Shelley also distinguished himself in his poetry of nature by his personifying the elemental forces—clouds, storms, thunder, lightning, etc. This is again in the manner of the ancient Greek—and it is Shelley's myth-making power. We may give an example from *The Cloud*:

> That orbed maiden with white fire laden,
> Whom mortals call moon,
> Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
> By the midnight breezes strewn;
> And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
> Which only the angels hear
> May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof
> The stars peep behind her and peer.

Often he describes the things of nature impersonally or objectively, as in *The Cloud*, or *Hymn to the Spirit of Nature*. In *The Skylark* and the *Ode to the West Wind* he

mixes up his own feelings with nature, and we are certainly more interested in such poems of nature. Sometimes he will weave a scientific fact into his description of nature, for example, in *The Cloud* :

> I am the daughter of earth and water,
> And the nursling of the sky :
> I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores ;
> I change but I cannot die.

Note also his mytho-poetic power ; he makes a myth of the cloud.

Shelley's Lyricism :

Shelley is a supreme lyric poet. As a lyric poet he satisfies two important conditions. In the first place, as the lyric was originally associated with music, Shelley has both word music and the music of sound. So the lyrics of Shelley have essentially the song-quality. Secondly, in his lyrics Shelley gives expression to his personal feelings, sentiments and passions. This means the subjective element, and modern lyric the subjective element is stressed above the song-quality.

Shelley has also the true lyric note, the lyric abandon. The true test of a lyric lies in the response it awakens in the reader's heart. Any one of Shelley's short lyrics will at once stir the reader's feeling, and for a moment he will be caught up in the flux of emotion and the magic of Shelley's lyrical self-expression. His genius is essentially lyrical, and so in his dramas are scattered short swallow-flights of songs. And he is equally skilled in songs, both objective and subjective.

Raleigh's description of a lyric is truly applicable to Shelley's poems—"The essence of the lyric is that it is made up of phrases, not words....The lyrical phrase, when the first two or three words of it have been pronounced, finishes itself. The lyric, that is to say, is almost always dependent for its music on easy idiomatic turns of speech. The surprising word occurs rarely ; with all the greater effect inasmuch as it is embedded in phrases that slip from the tongue without a trace of thought or effort."

Properly analysed, Raleigh's remark seems to emphasize as true elements in a lyric the music of sound and spontaneity of utterance. Shelley possesses these two qualities in a pre-eminent degree. We may consider here Palgrave's definition of "lyrical." "Lyrical," he says "has been...held essentially to imply that each poem shall turn on some single thought, feeling, or situation." If this test again is applied to Shelley's lyrics, it will be seen that the lyric unity of thought or emotion, or the lyric centrality of situation is easily achieved and maintained by Shelley.

Louis Cazamian writes, Shelley's lyricism is incomparable. In no other do we find the perfect sureness, the triumphant rapidity of this upward flight, this soaring height the super terrestrial quality, as well as the poignant intensity of the sounds which fall from these aerial regions. Truly never was the soul of a poet so spontaneously lyrical —in the modern sense in which the word no longer implies a concentrated purpose of learned, harmonious and noble exaltation, but the immediate and complete vibration of a naturally vocal sensibility in contact with the world. Everything with Shelley is the occasion for a musical stir, since his power of feeling are the keenest attuned and most delicate of this age; sensation, like emotion, with him, oversteps the normal diapason, moving in a higher scale; the susceptibility of his physical and moral organism is such, that his work bears throughout the diffused traces of a kind of psychological morbidness—the meeting of extremes, the confusion of different domains, the inversion of senses and values, etc. There subsists an energy, if not always a virility in this somewhat enervating atmospher, where the fibres of inner being are strung almost to breaking point : of the tone of Shelley's poetry is not that of a voluptuous sensuality, but of a keen aspiration, in which mystical desire, with its anguished pangs and spiritual raptures, transcends the joys and sufferings of ordinary mankind. The unattainable aim of these efforts is the impossible return of individual life to the whole, with which the poet's thrilling intuition seizes his essential kinship." The points that are

emphasized by Cazamian are the spontaneous flow of Shelley's emotion, breaking into unmatched cadenced music, which sometimes seems unearthly; the total absence of a conscious and balancing effort no straining for effect—he sings because he must, and his songs are "profuse strains of unpreemeditated art" to use his own words: super-sensitiveness of mind which borders on the abnormal with its conflicts and discords, dissolving in music; the lyric effluence, never drained dry though it seems at the point of exhaustion, hence an enervating atomosphere; no taint of sensuality in his lyric longings and desires: he seems to be

> Singing hymns unbidden,
> Till the world is wrought
> To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

and the self-merging of the poet in the unattainable which none is capable of except Shelley.

Form is as essential an element in lyric poetry as *matter*. Form and matter totally merge in Shelley's lyrics, and can hardly be separated. We may quote Cazamian again: Whatever the voice that speaks to us. Shelley has the gift of lending it the sweetest and most liquid harmonies, not the most sonorous and sensual, but pure in their vehement intensity. A delicious sadness emanates from this blending of notes, now high and now low, but always in a minor key; and the song they compose is the very utterance of the wounded sensibility which the divorce of action and a too lofty desire has given not only to Romanticism, but to the modern age. The flowing ease with which the words merge into one another, at the same time as the ideas they call forth join up together, goes to prove that for Shelley, the most poetical of poets, the psychological melody and the cadence of syllables, as spontaneous the one as the other, naturally formed but one music. He has experienced with all rhythms. The suppleness and variety of his prosody are extraordinary the Spenserian stanza of *Adonais* the "terza rima" of *The Triumph of Life*, the metrical combinations of *Prometheus*, are the variations of a master upon accepted themes, or

the inventions of an original genius. Even when the form testifies to the poet's negligence, and it were to his impatience, when it lacks the finish only to be acquired from an industrious art, it retains the felicity of inspired expression : and that language, like that measure, so individual, through their characteristic turn, their liquid but ever undulating flow, which is a continued creation, and not the forced adaptation of rhythmic utterance to a preconceived framework convey to us the poignant impression of contact with the innermost pulsations of the artist's heart.

Shelley's Poetic Theories :

We my select one small poem of Shelley's—*On a Poet's Lips I Slept*, which occurs in *Prometheus Unbound*, and from a study of it we may attempt working out his poetic theories. In the first place Shelley states the aim or object of a poet : "Nor seeks nor finds the mortal blisses." It means that the poet seeks an ideal—it may be an ideal satisfaction from pursuing an ideal scheme of perfection. No earthly happiness can be the aim or object of poet. References may be made to another poem, *An Exhortation*. In this poem Shelley says,

> Yet dare not stain with wealth or power
> A poet's free and heavenly mind

In this connection Shelley compares poets to chameleons. Chameleons feed on light and air, and if they were to feed on anything but these, they would soon grow as earthly as their brother lizards are. And then he exhorts :

> Children of a sunnier star,
> Spirits from beyond the moon.

The poet's soul, as Shelley conceives, is made of a finer essence ; by contact with wealth, or by material pursuits the poet's soul may become gross and vulgar. Hence Shelley exhorts the poet to refuse the boon of wealth or worldy possessions.

The poet "feeds on the aerial kisses of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses. Here Shelley touches on

the creative function of a poet. Matthew Arnold's theory of interpretation of life may be conveniently referred to in this connection. While the note of high seriousness which Matthew Arnold contends to be the test of great poetry, may be discounted in consideration of lyric poetry, the question of interpretation of life, or the application of ideas to life, has a bearing upon the end or aim of a poet. Shapes that haunt thought's wilderness are certainly concepts and images which the poet may be said to create, but these concepts and images have a vital relation to life, or to what the poet thinks of life and its riddles. The poet's main business is, therefore, with ideas, concepts, images that rise in his mind, stirred by visual impressions, or by his own cogitation on material, supplied by the outside world. The creative process of a poet lies in transforming and recreating such materials of experience—and these, the poetic creations, are really

Forms more real than living men,
 Nurslings of immortality !

Again what the poet creates has no necessary relation to things he observes :

He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom
Nor heed nor see what things they be.

The poet works by associations and analogies and the yellow bees in the ivy-bloom may suggest thoughts too deep for the occasion.

Here we may compare the famous lines of Shakespeare, which touch on the same truth of the creative process :

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven :

And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

There is another self-revealing stanza (*To a Skylark*) :

> Like a poet hidden
> In the light of thought,
> Singing hymns unbidden
> Till the world is wrought
> To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.

This is at any rate perfectly true of Shelley himself. It points to the truth that the stress of emotion, which is stirred by the moment's thought or fancy, as it were in a flash of illumination, the poet composes his song is response to an urge within. The poet, hidden in the light of thought, must be a lonely figure, shut up from humanity in a world of his own fancies and conceits. And it is no less true that Shelley's line of thought and reflection isolated him from humanity for the time beings. In these two lines we have essentially the picture of lyric poet, who lives in a world of his own, and sings unbidden, just to please himself. Shelley has all the characteristics implied in this stanza. He has spontaniety of utterance ; he draws his inspiration from a source within : and, therefore, he is said to be hidden in the light of thought.

In his *Defence of Poetry* (1821) Shelley expounds his views, which seem to aerated by Platonic ideas. Shelley is imbued with Platonism which touches off his poetry here and there. He says, "A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth." He conceives the secret of morals to be love—"a going out of our own nature, and identification of ourselves with the beautiful that exists in thought, action, or person, not our own." Then he dwells on the importance of imagination : "A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively ; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others ; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination." In the above words he describes the function of a poet, and he thinks very highly of poets as a class. Poetry's "secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life." "Poets are the hierophants of an unap-

prehended inspiration : the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present : the words which express what they understand not ; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.''

Shelley's Hellenism :

Shelley's Hellenism is more a matter of temper and outlook than of style or manner of expression. It is true that he has readily taken to classical stories, and made use of them in his own way in his poetry ; he has written poems on Apollo and Pan. But he does not seem to be obsessed by classical themes like Keats ; yet he is fairly interested in all that is Greek. He studied Plato thoroughly and was imbued with his spirit : Platonic ideas enter into his conception of love and his conception of poetry too.

In one respect he seems to have been curiously drawn to Greek spirit and temperament. The anthropomorphism of the ancient Greek seems to be revived in him. In observing the phenomena of nature Shelley often felt like the ancient Greek ; it was a sense of wonder and awe and a spontaneous response to the beauty of earth and heaven, accompanied by a tendency to personify the forces of nature. In other words, like the ancient Greek, he possesses the mythopoetic faculty, or the faculty of making new myths. It means giving life, motion and human attributes to the forces of nature, or thinking of them in terms of human personalities.

The best instance is his poem *Arethusa*. He adopts the old classical story, but the point is that he does not modernize it. He preserves the old classical spirit of the story. A river blends with a fountain, far away from its place of origin. This is made into a myth ; and so the fountain is a nymph, and she flies from the pursuit of her lover (and the river is transformed into the love and the lover finally overtakes her after following her along a long

and devious track, and becomes one with her. *The Cloud* illustrates Shelley's mythopoetic power. In this poem he personified the forces of nature, and gives them self-directing and purposed movement—almost a volition or will of their own. And at the same time he evokes the sense of awe and wonder, which the phenomena of nature produced in the mind of the primitive Greek.

Hellenism in the ordinary sense *i.e.* as characterizing the style or manner of expression, and, therefore, directness and simplicity of expression, should not be looked for in Shelley. Shelley is a romantic poet, and he has all the defects of excess—luxuriance of imagination, the white heat of passion as well as the languor of desire, and has none of the virtues of the wise restraint or moderation of the Greek. In another respect too he differs from a classical poet. Sometimes in his description of nature he introduces no human element, as in *The Cloud*, *The Sensitive Plant*, etc. Shelley's Hellenism is, therefore, of a unique brand. It is concerned with his outlook and temperament as a poet, and not with his style or manner of expression. It is significant that Keats wrote to him : "You might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and *load* every *rift* of *your subject with ore.*" Keats counsels Greek moderation and restraint.

Shelley's Pantheism :

Shelley does not commit himself to definite pantheism anywhere. But there are passages which seem to come near to pantheism. He often conceives of a Spirit diffused through, and permeating the universe—a Spirit that seems also to impel human thoughts. Shelley pays homage to such a Spirit in his *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty.* It is a Spirit that links the very grass we tread underfoot with the tremulous stars in the heavens. It, as Shelley says, is reflected in light and colour, in life and motion, which fill every crack and cranny in the universe. Sometimes it stirs the very air and weaves a spell of radiance. Shelley does often experience it in a thrill of thought. Such moments of rapt vision Shelley often describes. One passage may be quoted here :

How calm it was! the silence there
By such a chin was bound
That even the busy woodpecker
Made stiller by her sound
The invisible quietness;
The breath of peace we drew
With its soft motion made not less
The calm that round us grew.
There seemed from the remotest seat
Of the white mountain waste,
To the soft flower beneath our feet,
A magic circle traced,—
A spirit interfused around,
A thrilling silent life,
To momentary peace it bound
Our mortal nature's strife.

--*To Jane : The Recollection.*

We have the most definite exposition of his pantheistic views in *Adonais*. We quote the following as an illustration :

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely. He doth bear
His part, while the One Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world; compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross, that checks its flight,
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the heaven's light.

The One Spirit is the Universal Mind, working in and through nature, into which are infused life and motion, which is shaped into form and colour and invested with beauty and splendour; and, as Shelley says here, a poet also bears his part in making the world beautiful. Nature is also a manifestation of the Universal Mind. Pantheism makes Nature and God almost identical. It is

the idea of a spiritual principle ruling and pervading the observable world.

Stopford Brooke writes, "Shelley was not an atheist or a materialist. If he may be said to have occupied any theoretical position, it was that of an Ideal Pantheist: the position which with regard to Nature a modren Poet who cares for the subject, naturally—whatever may be his personal view—adopts in the realm of art. Wordsworth, a plain Christian at home, wrote about Nature as a pantheist. The artist, as I said loves to conceive of the universe, not as dead but as alive. Into that belief Shelley, in hours of inspiration, continually rose and his work is seldom more impassioned and beautiful than in the passages where he feels and believes in this manner. The finest example is towards the close of the *Adonais*. In his mind, however, the living spirit which, in its living, made the Universe, was not conceived of as Thought, as Wordsworth conceived it, but as Love operating into Beauty: and there is a passage on this idea in the fragment of the *Coliseum*, which is as beautiful in prose as that in *Adonais* is in verse. But it is only in higher poetic hours that Shelley seems or cares to realise this belief. In the quieter realms of poetry, in daily life, he confessed no such creed plainly; he had little or no belief in a thinking or living existence behind the phenomenal universe. It is infinitely improbable, he says, that the cause of the mind is similar to mind. Nothing can be more characteristic of him—and he has the same temper in other matters—than that he should have a faith with regard to a Source of Nature, into which he could soar when he pleased, in which he could live for a time, but which he did not choose to live in, to define, or to realise, continually."

Shelley's Mysticism:

Shelley believed in a Soul of the Universe, a Spirit in which all things live and move and have their being: which, as one feels in the *Prometheus*, is unamble, inconceivable even to man, for "the deep truth is imageless." His most passionate desire was not, as was Browning's, for an increased and ennobled individuality, but for the

mystical fusion of his own personality with this Spirit, this object of his worship and adoration. To Shelley, death itself was but the rending of a veil which would admit to the full vision of the ideal, which alone is true life. The sense of unity in all things is most strongly felt in *Adonais*, where Shelley's maturest thought and philosophy are to be found; and indeed the mystical fervour in this poem, especially towards the end, is greater than anywhere else in his writings. The *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* is in some ways Shelley's clearest and most obvious expression of his devotion to the Spirit of Ideal Beauty, its reality to him, and his vow of dedication to its service. But the *Prometheus* is the most deeply mystical of his poems: indeed, as Mrs. Shelley says, "It requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as Shelley's own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem."

Shelley, like Blake, regarded the human imagination as a divine creative force; Prometheus stand for the human imagination, or the genius of the world; and it is his union with Asia, the Divine idea, Spirit of Beauty and of Love, from which a new Universe is born. It is this union, which consummates the aspiration of humanity, that Shelley celebrates in the marvellous love-song of Prometheus. As befitted the disciple of Godwin, he believed in the divine potentiality of man, convinced that all good is to be found within man's own being, and that his progress depends on his own will.

> It is our will
> That thus enchains us to permitted ill—
> We might be otherwise—We might be all
> We dream of, happy, high, majestical.
> Where is the love, beauty and truth we seek
> But in our mind ?
>
> —*Julian and Maddalo.*

In the allegorical introduction so the *Revolt of Islam*, which is an interesting example of Shelley's mystical mythology, we have an insight into the poet's view of the good power in the world. It is not an almighty creator standing outside mankind, but a power which suffers and rebels and evolves, and is, in fact, incarnate in humanity

so that it is unrecognised by men, and indeed confounded with evil :

> And the Great Spirit of Good did creep among
> The nations of mankind, and every tongue
> Crushed and blasphemed him as he passed, for none
> Knew good from evil.

There is no doubt that to Shelley the form assumed by the divine in man was love. Mrs. Shelley, in her note to *Rosalind and Helen*, says that "in his eyes, it was the essence of our being, and all woe and pain arose from the war made against it by selfishness or insensibility, or mistake" : and Shelley himself says, "the great secret of morals is love : or a going out of our own nature, and identification of ourselves with beautiful which exists in thought, action, person, not our own."

Shelley was always searching for love ; and although he knew well, through his study of Plato, the difference between earthly and spiritual love, that the one is but the lowest step on the ladder which leads to the other, yet in actual practice he confounded the two. He knew that he did so ; and only a month before his death, he summed up in a sentence the tragedy of his life. He writes to Mr. Gisborne about the *Epipsychidion*, saying that he cannot look at it now, for "the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno" and continues, "if you are curious, however, to hear what I am and have been, it will tell you something thereof. It is as idealized history of my life and feelings. I think one is always in love with something or other ; the error—and I confess it is not easy for spirits encased in flesh and blood to avoid it—consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal."

—*C. F. E. Spurgeon.*

"Shelley as a Beautiful and Ineffectual Angel."

Matthew Arnold states his view thus :

"To all this we have to add the charm of the man's writings—of Shelley's poetry. It is his poetry, above everything else, which for people establishes that he is an

angel. Of his poetry I have not space now to speak. But let no one suppose that what of humour and selfdelusion such as Shelley's have no effect upon a man's poetry. The man Shelley, in very truth, is not entirely sane, and Shelley's poetry is not entirely sane either. The Shelley of actual life is a vision of beauty and radiance, indeed, but availing nothing, effecting nothing. And in poetry, no less than in life, he is a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain."

Boiled down, the charge means that Shelley's poetry is thin in substance, that it lacks the note of high seriousness. Matthew Arnold seems to apply to poetry utilitarian considerations. In some of his longer poems Shelley deals with theories, political and social; these theories fade into abstractions, and as such they cannot have much practical value. Arnold maintains that in life he achieves nothings. Similarly he means that in his poetry there is nothing to stay on—nothing solid and substantial to which the human spirit can turn in its hour of distress, and that it is full of fine and radiant abstractions.

We may summarize here Dowden's defence of Shelley against the charge brought by Arnold :

Dowden points out that although some of the visions which Shelley's poetry conjures up are but phantoms, showing thin and ghost-like indeed when one turns from them to the men and women of Shakespeare's play, or Scott's novels, yet idealist as Shelley was, he lived in some important respects in closer and more fruitful relation with the real world than did his great contemporary Scott; that because Shelley lived with ideas, he apprehended with something like prophetic insight those great forces which had been altering the face of the world during the nineteenth century—forces which are summed up under the names of democracy and science; that he apprehended these forces not from the mere material point of view, but from that of a spiritual being, uniting in his vision with democracy and science a third element, not

easy to name or define, an element of spiritually, which had been lately most potent in the higher thought and feeling of the time.

Dowden maintains that Shelley did not beat his wings in the void, but amid the prime forces of the modren world, and that this ineffectual angel was one of the heralds of the dawn of a new era in which struggle for freedom and justice would go on. Dowden writes "I recognise in Shelley all the illusions and sophisms of the revolutionary epoch. I recognise the vagueness of much of his humanitarian rhetoric. But humanitarian rhetoric sometimes may be practical beneficence in a nebulous state: let it condense and solidity and the luminous mist becomes an orb of love—the stout heart of one who would serve the needy and the downcast of our race. If love, justice, hope, freedom, fraternity be real, then so is the wiser part of the inspiration of Shelley's radiant song.

A poet is not necessarily a man of action, but he is often the interpreter of his age. Shelley is pre-eminently the interpreter of his age—of the revolutionary movement that began in his age of the struggle for freedom and justice. He sets forth in his poetry, passionate and sincere, though visionary and even fantastic now and then, the desires, longings, and aspirations, of the struggling people, people suppressed and exploited through long ages, and now rising to break their chains. Shelley is a revolutionary poet, and he is impregnated with revolutionary ideas. The humanitarian rationalism of the eighteenth century was quite familiar to him, but he could not surrender to its acquiescence in the established order of things. He was a born rebel. He rebelled against convention and cant, against prejudice and ignorance, and against religion too which he perceived to be an instrument of suppressing man's freedom—and which was after all an ally of political despotism. And he wanted to do away with the established order of things, which kept men in perpetual bondage.

Is he, after all, an ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain? Arnold pays tribute

to the excellence of his character by calling him an angel. His innocence, his guilelessness, his sincerity, his truth to himself, are as palpable as anything, Byron said, "He was without exception the best and least selfish man I ever knew." Yes, Shelley had an angelic character not only in his unselfishness but also in his love of mankind. He dreamed of the ideal world of perfect freedom and perfect love in which he so passionately believed. Was he ineffectual? He himself broke away from custom and tradition, from convention and sham morality, and from religion which could mean only a bondage to man. In his preface to *Prometheus Unbound* he says, "Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms a 'passion for reforming the world.' "We may take the lines from his *Ode to the West Wind*:

> Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
> Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
>
> ....
>
> Be through my lips to unawakened earth
> The trumpet of a prophecy.

It is 'the application of ideas to life,' which Arnold values so highly in good poetry. Arnold says that poetry is an interpretation of life. Now Shelley more than any of his contemporaries interprets the longings and aspirations of his age, and reflects the striving for freedom and justice.

The idea of 'ineffectual' will be furthest from our mind when we read the considered judgment of J. R. Ullman:

"Among his contemporaries in England Shelley stood alone. He was a truer child of his age than anyone except the inevitable Goethe and the inevitable Napoleon, and like them his position is at the pinnacle of a long development. The other great romantic poets fit less perfectly into the scheme of the times; they were not like Shelley, comprehensive in their interests or fundamentally expressive of their age in its totality. They were poets—great poets—and each of them, according to his lights,

was a true representative of his time ; they are not however, as tremendously significant historically as he was. Shelley was a symbol and a force ; they were not. They lack his universality and inevitability. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats were the supreme "poets of escape." The first two, in their youth, had hailed the coming of the Revolution with joy and anticipation ; they too had dreamed bright, gaudy dreams of happy Erewhons and had planned their promised land on the banks of the euphonius Susquehanna. But the brutal reality of bloody gutters and the whining guillotine and the carnage of Napoleon proved too much for them. Wordsworth took up celandines, Coleridge opium, and between them they created poetry of surpassing beauty.

Shelley—a Revolutionery :

We shall have to look back a little and trace the intellectual history of Shelley before we can understand why he is a revolutionary. Rationalism of the eighteenth century was an important factor. The eighteenth century was an age of prose, social-mindedness and reason—the age of Voltaire, Newton, Adam Smith, Swift, Fielding, Lessing, and Samuel Johnson. It was an age when poetry was at a low ebb, and held closer to the earth, feeling and imagination being drained off. Rationalism and pseudo-classicism could not be good soil for poetry. The novelists, scientists, and social thinkers of the day developed a trend of humanitarianism. It meant largely an earthly reorientation of human attitude to life, and it could little suit the rapturous strain of lyric. Shelley's mind was nourished on such prosaic, empirical, and rational thought in the beginning of the eighteenth century. He had intellectual affiliations with Locks, Hume and Kant, and later Berkeley stimulated the idealistic strains in his mind.

Eighteenth-century humanitarianism as first reflected itself in satire and invective (Voltaire, Swift, Fielding) ; later it tended towards radical propaganda, and so the existing order of things was attacked and the seed of revolution was sown, as in the writings of Helvetius, Holbach, Condorcet and Rousseau. In England their

doctrines were promulgated by Godwin. Tom Paine, Volney, and Holcroft. Before Shelley was twenty-one. Shelley read and absorbed the writings of Helverius. Holbach and Rousseau. In addition to these, he thoroughly studied William Godwin's *Political Justice*. The materialistic trend of these writings could not of course repress his imagination and idealism which were the essence of his being.

E. Neipokoeva, a Russian critic, writes, "At the time he was at Eton and Oxford, Shelley showed a lively interest in philosophy and natural science. His vast correspondence in these years shows his wide acquaintance with the literature of English philosophy, French Enlightenment, antiquity and Renaissance. At this time one of his important features clearly exhibited was his view of the world; it was a close blend between his philosophical and socio-political idea. Overcoming the deistic representation of the world. Shelley as an atheist formulated the clearly understandable view that religion "is very closely bound up with politics" and ever served the interests of the ruling classes."

The intellectual tradition to which he was born, and which he so readily assimilated drew him to the striving for freedom of the individual and the freedom of the classes, however his mind might have often drifted from the world of men and things to the realm of ideas. His rationality was beyond question, but it was often assailed by his overwhelming imagination, his unclouded vision of golden age to come, his speculative and idealistic trend. His idea of love as the solvent of all evil and oppression in the world might have also something to do with the diverting of his mind from practical politics.

His position is best summed up by J. R. Ullman: "......in his affiliations as well as in his militant individualism, he was a true child of the revolution and of the earnest ; rationalistic thinkers of an earlier generation who had given it its premises and its direction. He shared not only their emotional enthusiasm but he was also in intellectual accord with their basic dogmas and beliefs ;

and even in the later, riper days of golden song, when as a spirit pure and free and disembodied, he soared so far above the toiling world of transient men and transient things, he retained that credo of social reform and that unwavering belief in the perfectibility of man which had been born of the reasoning humanitarianism of the eighteenth century. No men and no schools can be said to have formed Shelley ; what they did was to reinforce his beliefs and supply food for his insatiable mind. As a poet he must make his bow to God alone ; but as a thinker and philosopher of the Revolution—in many respects the most sublime thinker which that world-madness produced—he is the lineal descendant of those prosaic, earthly reasoners of an earlier generation whose spirit and whose attitude toward life seem at first glance to be so dramatically opposed to his."

Stopford Brooke traces his revolutionary passion from the early years of his life as the result of the reaction to the society in which he lived and shows that this revolutionary passion dominates a large part of his poetry : "Unlike Wordsworth, he was a part of that class in English society which remained from the beginning untouched by the Revolution and which hated it. As he grew up he abhorred that society and all its ways, and directed all his energy againstits opinions. He was a revolution in himself. He set the authorities at Eton at defiance ; he was expelled from Oxford for atheism, and at once took his stand in a revolt against society. Then it was............that the still enduring ground-swell the French Revolution had caused in England broke upon him, and he was flooded by it. That swelling tide, though it had died out in the middle ranks of society, was still having among the working classes, and among minor poets who sang their wrongs and sorrows. . The misery they suffered increased its volume, and the ideas of which we have so often spoken rolled on in full power under the upper crust. Shelley went down to that level and drank there the cup of the Revolution. In 1812 he took up the cause of Ireland, and his "Address to the Irish People" might have been written at this present time by a gentle-minded Home-Ruler. In 1813

"*Queen Mab*' came out. In it the ideas of the Revolution are reasserted, combined with a deliberate attack on the whole state of society in England, and deliberate attack on religion as one of the chief curses of society. But the chief revolutionary element in it is that which prophesies a happier society, a golden time to come, the perfection of mankind to be wrought out by suffering, by martyrdom for truth. Shelley was really in despair about the present and he was forced to look forward for all he hoped and all he wished to work for. This was the position of his whole life."

Has Shelley any Philosophy or Metaphysical Views ?

Shelley is pre-eminently a poet—and also a thinker. interested in the struggle for freedom and justice in his age, He read Locke, Hume, Kant and Berkeley ; he read Plato and was thoroughly imbued with his ideas. The question is whether he did have a definate philosophy of his own. He wrote to Peacock on January 26, 1819 : "I consider poetry very subordinate to moral and political science and if I were well, certainly I would aspire to the latter ; for I can conceive a great work, embodying the discoveries of all ages, and harmonizing the contending creeds by which mankind have been ruled. Far from me is such an attempt............ " It is open to question whether Shelley was equally fitted for metaphysical speculation or for political science as for poetry. In the direction of metaphysical speculation of political science are such fragments as the unfinished *Defence of Poetry the Essay on a Future State, the Essay on Christianity,* the *Essay on the Punishment of Death,* and the diffused *Speculations on Metaphysics.* Shelley had, it is true, speculative ideas, and if he had any ambition to be a philosopher, he could not have the patience and steadiness to organize them into a system of philosophy. Of course Mrs Shelley thinks that "had not Shelley deserted metaphysics for poetry in his youth, and had he not been lost to us early, so that all his vaster projects were wrecked with him in the waves, he would have presented the world with a complete theory of mind ; theory to which Berkeley, Coleridge and

Kant would have contributed; but more simple, unimpugnable and entire than systems of these writers." As we think, by temperament he was unfitted to be a Philosopher. Mrs. Shelley notes in him this characteristic—"thought kindled imagination and awoke sensation, and rendered him dizzy from too great keenness of emotion." This only confirms our view. Shelley was not destined to be a philosopher.

He read the philosophical writings of the eighteenth century, and might have assimilated the ideas that suited his temperament. The agnosticism of Hume might have appealed to him. Hume denied the material basis of things and affirms that human consciousness or mind is nothing but a stream of sensations. The shifting mood and fancies of Shelley, the rapid succession of imagery in which they are flung forth, the quickest transition of thought and emotion, (while there is little of incoherence, because these ever-changing feelings and emotions are held together by his imagination), which we find to be the characteristics of his poetry, might well lead us to presume that his mind is a stream of sensations. But it cannot be the whole truth. Shelley's shaping and plastic imagination gives unity and co-ordination to his fancies and emotions, however they may come hurtling forth. The material world has little objective reality to Hume. A poet and any poet may, in a certain mood, dismiss the material world as existing, and create a fantasy world of his own, and Shelley is the poet to do it oftenest. We may quote the following from *Adonais* :

> Desires and Adorations.
> Winged Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
> Splendours and Glooms, and glimmering incarnations
> Of Hopes and Fears, and twilight Fantasies,

These are not like the abstract personifications of the eighteenth century poets; they seem to be *live* personifications; yet there is an air of unreality about them. Stopford Brooke's comment is worth noticing: "He created in this immaterial world ethereal images of Justice and Truth, of Fortitude and Power...... ...hosts of impersonated

qualities of the mind that, in their unreality, take away all vitality from the impersonations of the greater moral Ideals. Even these, which we willingly imagine as actual, are stripped of their reality by Shelley's dissolving power."

Hume is a materialist (though he denies the material (world ; Berkeley is an idealist, and for him nothing exists but the mind, the thinking and his ideas, and the material world cannot exist except as it perceived by the mind. We cannot really say that Shelley commits himself to the views of either Hume or Berkeley. We may take another verse from *Adonais* :

> Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
> He hath awakened from the dream of life
> 'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep
> With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
> And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
> Invulnerable nothings.

Life is said to be a dream and phantom, and death, the reality and truth. It is just a way of looking at things; it does not mean that the materiality of human existence is denied. All that it can mean is that so long as we live in this world, our life is full of errors and delusions against which we go on struggling, and we seldom attain the ultimate truth. It may be a philosophical view. The object of philosophical speculation is to discover the ultimate reality, essence, or substance, and there are different approaches to it, as suggested by philosophers: for example, Kant attempts a reconciliation of materialism and idealism, and asserts the existence of a reality outside of our consciousness, and calls it the "thing-in-itself," and it is unknowable beyond our cognition ("transcendental"). Shelley here postpones the knowledge of the ultimate reality beyond life.

On analysing Shelley's way of thinking, we may say that Shelley, with Berkeley, accepts the mind as the *substance* and the material world depending on the mind that preceives it. But Berkeley holds that it is the mind of God that preceives everything. Shelley does not seem to subscribe to this view. Again with Kant he may hold that

a reality exists outside our consciousness and it is unknowable though we may strive to reach out to it. There is such a hint in the verse quoted above. We may quote another verse where this idea—the idea of the ultimate reality is more emphatically stated, which we strive to grasp and comprehend :

> The One remains, the many change and pass,
> Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's
> shadows fly,
> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of eternity,
> Until Death tramples it to fragments. Die,
> If thou wouldest be with that which
> thou dost seek !

Note the expression 'earth's shadows,' which would again suggest the unreality of earthly existence, and that earthly existence can only be a grouping for the truth or ultimate reality, which we cannot reach until we die. His views cannot be definitely tied down to any particular system of philosophy. His views as stated here that we cannot know the ultimate truth until we are released from the bondage of life, it is personal to him, whether it is philosophical or not.

He conceives the ultimate reality, sometimes as Love, sometimes as Beauty, sometimes as Goodness. Love, Beauty and Goodness may be after all identical. He at last thinks that these principles are active in the world, shaping and re-shaping it, and may ultimately mould the destiny of mankind. He is not without hope, but there is no knowing when this hope about mankind will be fulfilled. We may quote again from *Adonais* :

> That light whose smile kindles the universe,
> That beauty in which all things work
> and move,
> The benediction which the eclipsing curse
> Of brith can quench not, that sustaining
> Love
> Which, through the web of being blindly wove
> By man and beast and earth and air and sea,

Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality,

Stopford Brooke comments on the above thus:

"Sometimes, however, this power of impassionating himself as he worked in the realm of the understanding, where analytic reasoning ruled, was a good thing, when the idea he was considering was itself a noble and ideal one. And when he was thus uplifted he wrote with superb beauty.

"He is borne away in this fashion in "*Adonais*." He has been thrilled as he wrote, into keen and lofty feeling, and suddenly, in the rush of this feeling, he rises into a higher conception of the Essence in the universe than that it is Thought alone. He transfers that idea to the realm of emotion—transfers the expression of it from philosophy to poetry—and transfigures it into a spiritual power, into the statement that Love, and Love only, is the universe."

In his emotional excitation and in a sort of ecstatic vision Shelley may rise to the idea of love as the fundamental principle of the world. It is a truth that a note in a moment of exalted feeling may glimpse, but it may be doubted whether it has anything to do with a philosophical view. The very principle of Love seems to be contradicted when Shelley describes birth as a curse. Death cancels the curse of birth, and Death must be then the Benediction that Shelley speaks of. "The fire for which all thirst" must be the ultimate truth, and it may be Love or Beauty. It is not clear what is really meant by "the last clouds of cold mortality"; Shelley is not certainly thinking of his coming death—he might be thinking of human frailties and delusions which are done away with by the closer glimpse of the ultimate truth of the world Love or Beauty. From his lyrical expression of hopes and fears, exaltations and despairs, it is not possible to deduce any system of philosophy.

Shelley's own quest of the fundamental principle of the world, whether Beauty, Love, or Goodness—leave him

after all unsatisfied. He has a restless and roving spirit; his moods change from hope to despair unaccountably, and he cannot thus be in a position to define exactly what the fundamental principle of the world is .....Perhaps the Heraclitan flux—"Everything flows, everything changes," might explain Shelley's instability. In his *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* he describes this Beauty as "the lawful shadow of some unseen power...........visiting this various world with an inconstant wings as summer winds that creep from flower to flower", it can mean that he can but glimpse it now and then, as the attribute 'inconstant' would imply—and it seems that despite himself he puts his faith in it and he says :—

> They know that never joy illumed my brow
> Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
> This world from its dark slavery,
> That thou—O awful Loveliness.
> Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot
> express.

Beauty that rules the world, will finally redeem mankind—this is the hope that Shelley entertains. This Beauty is an intelligent and active principle, working in the world. It is a conception, if it is philosophical at all, which could have been formed by a poet alone—a poet, who dedicates himself to beauty, and finally, elevates it to the fundamental principle of the world. This Beauty is of course identical with love—and so it can change the face of the world and mould the destiny of mankind.

We may sum up in the words of Stopford Brooke: "It is profoundly characteristic of Shelley and it separates him from all other poets, makes his charm, and yet fills us with regret, that this thing to which he gave his worship should be only the shadow of some greater power which was itself a shadow, for he loved to multiply vagueness on vagueness. It was but the shadow of the Spirit of Beauty which fell on him in youth, and we find so out of the real world is he—that the thing which stirred him into wild ecstasy was the shade of a shade, the ghost of a ghost. What other poet has ever lived in such a world.

could be wrought to such emotion by the film of a film of thought. Nor was the emotion unreal! It was actual, far more keen and finer than that which he could give to mortal persons. It is the impossibility of our often entering into this super-subtile ethereality, this thin and eager flame of passionate worship for an ideal like that of Beauty, at the very moment when it is dissolving into the thinnest clouds of thought, which makes Shelley, when he is writing only as the artist, out of his own intellectual imagintation, the least comprehensible of all the poets of England. When we think we have secured his thought, it vanishes, to take another form, and unless you are fond of this infinite change, you will not care for Shelley. He is always there, he changes but he cannot die, but if you think to fix him down to one shape, his smile is malign, and his answer is this :—

> I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
> And out of the caverns of rain,
> Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb
> I arise, and unbuild again."

Opinions of Critics :

Among the lyric poets, Shelley, who was a lyric poet before everything, needs no longer to have his claim reaffirmed. If we judge him by the verdict of those English poets who, coming after him, have sustained his ideals, we have from three of the four nearest him, Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne, his undivided praise, while from the fourth Matthew Arnold, if we have a doubtful note, it was struck in the dangerous pursuit of comparative criticism, set going in this instance by the rival claims of Byron, of all men. Time, moreover, and the spirit of the time, have so far certainly not strengthened Arnold's criticism, as he thought they would. If we judge Shelley by his critics, as apart from the poets, again there is no question of the balance in his high favour. And if by the love those idolaters of poetry, the saving remnant who exist among men and make its pursuit and maintenance possible, there is still less doubt of his fame.

"To the lyric realm he may well serve as gate-keeper.

though if we choose him so, it is for reasons in no way disparaging to his fellow-immortals. In taking him as the type of his lyric race and kind, we would convert his praise into a tribute to his whole order, as we might turn his own praise of Dante into a tribute to himself: 'His very words are instinct with spirit; each is a spark, a burning atom of inextinguishable thought."

Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, from which the above sentence comes, provides us with a characteristic prose testament, explaining to some extent the influence of his sacred spring, and his art of using it. Shelley, as one would have him, believed in the demoniac possession of the lyric poet:- "Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, 'I will compose poetry. The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or of its departure, Could this influence be durable in its original parity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet. I appeal to the greatest poets of the present day, whether it is not an error to assert that the finest passage of poetry are produced by labour and study."

Every evidence that can be given of Shelley's practice of the lyric art agrees with this theoretic account of it in such passages as these. —*Ernest Rhys*.

Other lyric poets, it has been said, sing of what they feel. Shelley in his lyrics sings of what he wants to feel. The thrills of desire, the gushes of emotion, are all straining after something seen afar but unattained, something distant or future; or they are wails of passionate despair—utter despondency for something hopelessly

gone. Yet it must be owned that these bursts of passionate desire after ideal beauty set our pulses a-throbbing with a strange vibration, even when we do not really sympathise with them. Even his desolate wails make those for a moment seem to share his despair who do not really share it. Such is the charm of his impassioned eloquence, and the witchery of his music. —*Shairp.*

Ever thwarted, and never nearer the happiness, he desired for himself and others, he did not, like ordinary men, attain a juster notion of the relation between good and ill in himself and in the world ; he lapsed into a plaintive bewildered melancholy, translating the inexplicable conflict of right and wrong into the transcendental view that

"Life like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity."

But his failure is the world's gain, for all that is best in his poetry, is this expression of frustrated hope. He has indeed, when he is moved simply by public passion, some wonderful trumpet-notes ; what hate and indignation can do, he sometimes does. And his rapturous dreams of freedom can stir the intellect, if not the blood. But it must be remembered that poetry inspired solely by revolutionary enthusiasm is liable to one fatal weakness ; it degenerates too easily into rhetoric. To avoid being a didactic treatise it has to deal in high-flown abstractions, and in Shelley fear, famine, tyranny, and the rest, sometimes have all the emptiness of the classical manner. They appear now as brothers, now as parents, now as sisters of one another ; the task of unravelling their genealogy, would be as difficult as it is pointless. If Shelley had been merely the singer of revolution, the intensity and sincerity of his feeling would still have made him a better poet than Byron ; but we would not have been a great poet, partly because of his strained and false view of "the moral universe" and of himself........................

Fortunately for our literature, Shelley did more than arraign tyrants. The Romantic Movement was not merely a new way of considering human beings in their

public capacity ; it meant also a new kind of sensitiveness to their environment...................... The Romantic poets tended to be absorbed in their trees and hills, but when they also looked in the same spirit on their own hearts, that operation added yet another world to poetry. In Shelley the absorption of the self in nature is carried to its furthest point. If the passion to which nature moved him is less deeply meditated than in Wordsworth and Coleridge, its exhuberance is wilder ; and in his best lyrics it is inseparably mingled with the passion which puts him among the world's two or three greatest writers of love-poems.

Of all his verse, it is these songs about nature and love the every one knows and likes best. And, in fact, many of them seem to satisfy what is perhaps the ultimate test of true poetry ; they sometimes have the power, which makes poetry akin to music, of suggesting by means of words something which cannot possibly be expressed in words. —*S. Waterlow.*

Shelley's rank in literature and in the political development of the nineteenth century is open to no question. Both positions are clear and marked. He was the child of Reaction against that Eighteenth Century at which Carlyle storms as the personification of Formalism in Literature and Death in Religion. In all this there is, of course, much exaggeration ; but the result of the French Revolution, of the long Napoleonic wars, of the rise of German thought and philosophy, the progress of Romantic against the Classical school of writing, had caused a great breach between the past with its clear, cold manner largely based on Latin culture at schools and colleges, and the new feeling for life and nature derived mainly from the Greek. The belief now was that man should sing, not because he could make his work as formally perfect as Pope or Gray but because, as Tennyson says,

I do but sing because I must
And pipe but as the linnets sing.

Shelley, too, was everywhere in revolt, and to the last had arrived at no definite thinking on any literary

or political subject, unless negatively............*Queen Mab* is a wild protest against universal corruption, as he believed, in Church and Stare ; the *Revolt of Islam* (1817) sets forth the imperative duty of breaking with the past, in root and branch ; *Peter Bell, the Third* (1819) attacks the doctrinal position of Wordsworth : while *Healls* (1821) is written with the direct intention of rousing the Greeks against their Turkish oppressors. If his position in the history of political thought is clear, no less so is his poetical rank. It is with the first names, but of him it may be said that the theory of poetic spontaneity has acted somewhat to his disadvantage. Much of his imagery is vague, dreamy, misty and even unearthly; though this is saying no more than that the unearthly is the very essence of all Shelley's work and thought. Clouds, stars, flowers, predominate unduly in his vocabulary and pictures, so that his poetry rather pails when continuously read. But as to his power over the purely poetical and melodious sides of his art there never were two opinions.

—*W. K. Leask.*

"Poetry," he wrote, "is a sword of lightning, ever unsheathed, which consumes the scabbard that would contain it...................Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and the circumference of all knowledge." One might substitute "the spirit of man" for the word "poetry" in these definitions and their validity would be unimpaired, for the one is simply the emanation of the other. His song was an inseparable part of him. It was the sound of his spirit in motion ; it was the centre and circumference of knowledge, in that it was the centre and circumference of the human spirit. Shelley's verse, like the personality from which it generated, is concentrated to the one end that was the goal of his united being, and its mood is not like, that of poets, one of appreciation but of intense desire ; indeed, one may say that, whereas the average singer has a range of several loosely related moods, he had but one. He harped eternally upon the same note, seeming to derive a 'masochistic ecstasy from its unending and unanswered vibration' and when, in his writing, he was enabled to match the sustained constancy

of his spirit, he considered his verse scarcely poetry at all. So much of his work is fragmentary because he was almost incapable of writing a line which was not an expression of his "self"; on those occasions when the artist in him was unable to keep pace with the man he would either write nothing or mark time in translations and in the composition of objective of verses, which, however beautiful in imagery and craftsmanship, he could never regard as more than the playthings of an off-hour. His genuine poetry must spring clean and unwarped from the spiritual travail that was his life; it must possess its perfect homogeneity and its unswerving oneness of direction. He wrote song because he loved a song. What he *was* and what he *did* were utterly one.

J. R. Ullman.

Introduction to Adonais

Date of Composition:

Adonais is an elegy on the death of Keats. Keats died in Rome on February 23, 1821. Shelley wrote his *Adonais* soon after this. Shelley was led to believe that the bitter attack upon Keats in the *Quarterly Review*, was responsible for his early death while he was suffering from consumption. Shelley penned a letter to the editor of the *Quarterly Review*, but it was not completed and despatched. This letter was written in protest, and in it Shelley states the cause of his death:

"Poor Keats was thrown into a dreadful state of mind by this review; which, I am persuaded, was not written with any intention of producing the effect—to which it has at least greatly contributed—of embittering his existence, and inducing disease from which there are now but faint hopes of his recovery. The first effects are described to me to have resembled insanity, and it was by assiduous watching that he was restrained from effecting purposes of suicide. The agony of his sufferings at length produced the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs, and the usual process of consumption appears to have begun. He is coming to pay me a visit in Italy: but I fear that, unless his mind can be kept tranquil, little is to be hoped from the influence of climate."

Shelley might have had this information from Gisborne and it was certainly a much exaggerated account. On July 27, 1820, Shelley wrote a letter to Keats, inviting him to come and stay with him at Pisa for his health. Soon after this he drafted the letter to the editor of the *Quarterly Review.* In his letter to Keats his opening words are : "I hear with great pain the dangerous accident you have undergone (recurrence of blood-spitting from the lungs), and Mr. Gisborne, who gives me the account of it, adds that you continue to wear a consumptive appearance." So Gisborne appears to be the source of all this information to Shelley.

Keats, however, could not accept Shelley's invitation. On September 18, 1820, Keats left England for Italy, accompanied by Joseph Severn. Reaching Rome, they settled at once in lodgings, which Dr. Clark had taken for them in the Piazza di Spagna. Keats was under the care of Dr. Clark and Severn was most diligent in his attention to him. Keats, felt a little better in the beginning, and he was cheerful too, but soon a relapse came with haemorrhage and violent fever. But his death was peaceful; it occurred on February 23, 1821. He was buried in the old Protestant Cemetery of Rome under a little altar-tomb sculptured with a Greek lyre—and the epitaph it bore was : "Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

Shelley wrote a letter to Severn, to whom he had sent a copy of *Adonais.* The letter is dated *Pisa, November 26th, 1821* :—

Dear Sir—I send you the elegy on poor Keats—but I wish it were better worth your acceptance. You will see, by the preface, that it was written before I could obtain any particular account of his last moments ; all that I still know, was communicated to me by a friend who had derived His information from Colonel Finch : and I have ventured to express, as I felt, the respect and admiration which your conduct towards him demands.

In spite of his transcendent genius, Keats never was nor ever will be, a popular poet ; and the total neglect and obscurity in which the astonishing remnants of his mind still lie, was hardly to be dissipated by a writer,

Who, however he may differ from Keats in more important qualities, at least resembles him in that accidental one, a want of popularity.

I have little hope, therefore, that the poem I send you will excite any attention, nor do I feel assured that a critical notice of his writting would find a single reader. But for these considerations, it had been my intention to have collected the remnants of his compositions and to have published them with a life and criticism. Has he left any poems or writings of whatsoever kind, and in whose possession are they? Perhaps you would oblige me by information on this point.

... ...

For my part, I little expected, when I last saw Keats at my friend Leigh Hunt's, that I should survive him.

... ...

As we see here, *Adonais* was written by Shelley on hearing of Keats's death before he could obtain any particular account of his last moments."

To Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, Shelley wrote on June 5, 1821: "I have been engaged these last days in composing a poem on the death of Keats, which will shortly be finished..............It is a highly-wrought *piece of art*, and perhaps better in point of composition, than anything I have written."

To C. Ollier he wrote on June 8, 1821: "You may announce for publication a poem entitled *Adonais*. It is a lament on the death of poor Keats, with some interposed stabs on the assassins of his peace and of his fame........... My poem is finished, and consists of about forty Spenser stanzas.........If you have interest enough in the subject I could wish that you inquired of some of the friends and relations of Keats respecting the circumstances of his death and could transmit me any information you may be able to collect and especially as to the degree in which, as I am assured, the brutal attack in the *Quarterly Review* excited the disease by which he perished." After the poem was finished and sent to the press, he wrote again a letter to Gisborne, and it appears that Shelley was more deeply moved to hear the accounts of Keats's death than when

he had written the poem on the mere report of his death, and he had now only the satisfaction that he had rightly castigated the savage critics of Keats in his poem. We may quote here the first two paragraphs of his letter to Gisborne: "I have received the heart-rending account of the closing scene of the great genius whom envy and ingratitude scourged out of the world. *I do not think that if I had seen it before, I could have composed the poem.* The enthusiasm of the imagination would have overpowered the sentiment.

"As it is, I have finished my Elegy; and this day I send it to the press at Pisa. You shall have a copy the moment it is completed. *I have dipped my pen in consuming five for his destroyers: otherwise the style is calm and solemn.*"

We may take it that the poem was finished by June 8, 1821, as we see from his letter to C. Ollier. We also see what the dominant impression of Shelley was when he wrote the poem. It was that the savage reviewers had killed Keats. He felt drawn to Keats as a poet of "transcendent genius," and took his side against the brutal and fanatical attack that was launched against him, and which precipitated his death.

Here we shall have to consider whether the *Quarterly Review's* attack on Keats was really responsible for his disease and his early death, as Shelley thinks. There is a misconception about Keats which both Byron and Shelley entertain. Shelley speaks of "poor Keats." Byron writes in *Done Juan*.

> John Keats, who was killed off by one critique,
> Just as he really promised something great,
>
> ... ...
>
> Poor fellow! His was an untoward fate;
> 'Tis strange the mind, that fiery particle,
> Should let itself be snuff'd out by an article.

Keats was far from being a frail, unstable character. His brother said, "John was the very soul of manliness and courage." He was not the man to be broken by the vituperative attack of his critics. He writes, "My own criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond that *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly Review* could possibly inflict."

Shelley speaks only of the *Quarterly Review*, but the attack upon Keats in a series of articles on the *Cockney School of Poetry* in *Blackwood's Magazine* shows an extremely vulgar taste: we may quote one significant remark from it: "It is better and wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop, Mr. John, back to "plaster, pills, and ointment-boxes, etc." Keats treated this attack with as much contempt as it deserved. The vindictiveness of *Blackwood* continued unabated even after Keats's death; nor did it spare even Shelley on his death: "Keats had been dished—utterly demolished and dished—by *Blackwood* long before Mr. Gifford's scribes mentioned his name ....But let us hear no more of John Keats. It is really too disgusting to have him and his poems recalled in this manner after all the world thought they had got rid of the concern." And this is about Shelley—and we cannot think of anything in more despicable taste : "Mr. Shelley died, it seems, with a volume of Mr. Keat's poetry "grasped with one hand in his bosom"—rather an awkward posture, as you will be convinced if you try it. But what a rash man Shelley was to put to sea in a frail boat with Jack's poetry on board !"............Down went the boat with a "swirl"! I lay a wager that it righted soon after ejecting Jack."

Form and Structure of the Poem :

Adonais is a pastoral elegy like Spenser's *Astrophel*, a lament on the death of Sidney, Milton's *Lycidas* lamenting the death of Edward King, Arnold's *Thyrsis* lamenting the death of Clough. Pastoral elegy goes back to the past. It was revived and cultivated in the Renaissance period. The great song of David for Saul and Jonathan. (2 *Samuel* i) was an elegy. The famous *Lament of Moschus for Bion* of the second century B. C. is an example which it will be more appropriate to consider here. Originally the word, *elegy*, had no necessary connection with lament. It meant a poem written in classical elegiac meter (a dactylic hexameter followed by a pentameter). The elegiac meter was used in Greece for camp-songs, exhortation, dedications and history by Mimnermus, Anacreon and others, as well as for commemorative songs, epitaphs

and laments. Latin elegy developed the love theme in the work of Tibullus, Ovid, Propertius and others. Classical elegy might be then on any one of a great variety of themes, though it is true that laments and commemorative songs were particularly frequent in Greek.

Coleridge defines elegy as "the form of poetry natural to the reflective mind," and as such it may use any subject so long as it is related to the poet Coleridge's view seems to have been unconsciously combined with the most popular Greek use of elegy for a meditative lament for the dead. Pastoral elegy was the outcome of a literary convention, which embraced the lives of shepherds, their loves, griefs, singing matches, etc. The *Bucolics* of Theocritus first founded the tradition. It might be doubted whether pastoral poetry was ever closely connected with the real working-day lives of shepherds. There were popular songs of shepherds referring to the legendary Daphnis, the blinded shepherd singer of Sicily. Theocritus included some realistic detail in his pictures of rustic life. In his successors, Moschus and Bion, there was little pretence of realism. The convention appears to have been well established by the *Lament of Moschus for Bion,* which set the tone for centuries to come. The striking feature was lament in idealized rustic surroundings, which epitomized the ageless beauty of the imagined golden world of Arcadia and the aching longing for it of humanity barred out. What Virgil did in his *Eclogues* was to envisage this golden world amid the medley of his references to political and other contemporary events, and to naturalize Theocritean themes into northern Italian landscape. Pastoral novels came to be written: Boccaccio's *Ameto* and Sidney's *Arcadia* may be mentioned here. There were also pastoral dramas (Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* and Jonson's *Sad Shepherd*). And the pastoral tradition was also allied to elegy, Spenser introduces lament in his *Shepherds Calendar,* while in it the conventions of singing-match, dialgoue and political and religious comments were freely used. The link-up between pastoral and elegy is properly seen in Spenser's *Astrophel*.

The association of pastoral and elegy, rather contradictory in tone and spirit, needs to be a little further considered. Pastoral poetry sketched an ideal life—the life of shepherds, simple and unsophisticated, untroubled by any perplexities ; as we have said above, it is the picture of a golden world, for which the hearts of problem-ridden city dwellers yearned. E.K. Chambers suggests the explanation :

"The 'pastoral melancholy' is by no means part of the ideal..................There the shepherd life is uniformly considered as blithe and joyus, unvexed by any sorrow that time or song cannot readily cure. But in reality, the life of the fields is never without its undertone of sadness. Clear away the fripperies of civilization, put yourself into touch with the great heart of things, and the primal tragedies of existence, the burden of labour and the pang of loss, become, not less, but more affecting. In the hush of the woods and pastures, the "still-sad music of humanity" is plainly audible. And if you go back to Theocritus, only another way of returning from convention to reality, the echo of this music rarely ceases to sound. Especially did such sentiment tend to connect itself with the idea, always so intolerable to the pagan imagination, of death. We have already noted among the primitive modes of Sicilian song, the dirge for some dead comrade, or in commemoration of the mythical herdsman, Daphnis. Bion has left us a literary adaptation of such a theme. And when Bion himself died, Moschus used the form to express, in poetic metaphor, the sorrow of those who had loved him for the lost singer and friend. In our own literature it has become traditional for such a purpose. Again and again throughout the centuries.

"The same sweet cry no circling seas can drown
In melancholy cadence rose to swell
Some dirge of Lycidas or Astrophel,
When lovely souls and pure, before their time.
Into the dusk went down.

Philip Sidney and Edward King, John Keats and Arthur Clough, all alike cut off by an ineluctable fate in the

flower of their days; for all alike the cadences of a half-forgotten Greek poet have woven their imperishable memorial."

Milton's *Lycidas* may be taken here as a typical example of pastoral elegy. The poem has a pastoral setting; Milton represents himself as a shepherd, and so is Edward King, a fellow of Christ College, Cambridge, who was drowned in his passage from Chester to Ireland, on August 10, 1637, and whose death he mourns in the poem:

> For we were nurst upon the self-same hill,
> Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill.

He introduces W. Chappell, the Tutor of Christ's College:

> And old Damaetas lov'd to hear our song.

In his poem there are references to Theocritus. Moschus, and Virgil. It means that Milton draws his inspiration from the old pastoral elegy:

> O fountain Arethusa, and thou honoured flood,
> Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds.
> That strain I heard was of a higher mood.

We have noted above that Virgil in his pastoral made references to political and contemporary events. In *Lycidas* Milton breaks into a denunciation of Land and his policy in reviving the Catholic ritual in the Church of England, and of the corruption of the clergy in lines 113-131. It is in pastoral imagery that the corrupt church and elergy are described:

> Of other care they little reck'ning make,
> Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
> And shove away the worthly bidden guest:
> Blind mouths,—that scarce themselves know how to hold
> A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least
> That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!

The point is that Milton keeps the pastoral setting and atmosphere throughout the poem. At last he rises to the triumphat note:

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the wat'ry floor :
So sinks the Day-star in the ocean-bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping-head,
And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.

Shelley's *Adonais* is, it is true, a pastoral elegy, but there is a difference. Unlike Milton, he breaks away from the pastoral convention. He models himself directly upon Bion and Moschus : in the beginning of the poem we can trace the influence of both upon him, but later he begins to follow his own line of thought, and almost discards pastoral imagery and pastoral atmosphere. It is true that he describes the mourners, Byron and Moore as Mountain Shepherds. There seems to be nothing of a shepherd about them.

'Midst others of less not came one frail Form.

Here Shelley begins to speak of himself—and it is an intimate self-revelation in highly metaphorical language—and he looks least like a shephered, and neither does he speak the language of a shepherd. Then he lashes out at the critics of Keats. From now on Shelley discards pastoral similitudes and pastoral imagery. The pastoral convention allows Shelley's attack upon the critics of Keats, just as Milton in his *Lycidas* attacks the corrupt church and clergy.

Peace, peace ! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life.

With these words Shelley rises into a higher strain of reflection far beyond the pastoral tone and temper in which the poem might have opened. We may call it pantheism—"One Spirit's plastic stress" shaping and reshaping the world—the One Spirit that Shelley identifies with Beauty and Good. And Keats is now

a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely.

The next point to consider here is what Shelley borrows from Bion's *Lament for Adonais* and Moschus's

Lament for Bion. He adopts the name Adonais for Keats. There can be no other explanation for this than that as Shelley partly models himself upon Bion, he chooses *Adonais* as the little, and it is a variant of Adonais. *Adonais* has been explained by some as a lament for Adonis, which will suggest that Shelley might seek to identify Keats with Adonais. The legend about Adonais might throw some light. Adonais, a beautiful youth, was beloved by Aphrodite. He died of a wound which he received from a boar during the chase. The flower anemone sprang from his blood. The grief of the goddess at his death was so great, that the gods of the lower world allowed him to spend six months of every year with Aphrodite on earth. His death and return to life were celebrated at annual festivals (*Adonia*) at Byblos, Alexandria in Egypt. Athens and other places. It was a nature-cult : the death of nature in winter and its revival in spring were symbolized by Adonais in the annual festival for him.

Now we can see whether there can be any parallel between Keats and Adonis. Adonis dies to live again. Shelley promises the immortality of Keats as a poet in his elegy—and we may say that more than anything else the poem is a paean of Keats's immortality.

> Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
> He hath awakened from the dream of sleep,

Still further on Keats is made one with Nature :

> there is heard
> His voice in all her music, from the moan
> Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird.

Note that Adonais is Nature too—the personification of Nature. Keats is a portion of the loveliness of Nature which he once made more lovely. Finally he is merged in that One Spirit which permeates Nature. It is in fact a reorientation of the Adonais-cult. The title—*Adonais*—has been, therefore appropriately chosen.

It may be shown too that Shelley begins his poem in a strain similar to that of Bion. Bion's *Lament* for *Adonais* begins thus :

Woe, woe for Adonis, he hath perished, the beauteous

Adonais, dead is the beauteous Adonis, the Loves join in the lament.

Shelley substitutes Urania for Cytherea (Aphrodite) in Bion.

And the rivers bewail the sorrows of Aphrodite, and the wells are weeping Adonis on the mountains. The flowers flush red for anguish and Cytherea through all the mountain-knees, through every dell doth shrill the piteous dirge. Woe, woe for Cytherea, he hath perished, the lovely Adonis!

And Echo cried in answer, He hath perished, the lovely Adonis. And Shelley brings in Echo too:

> Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
> And feeds her grief with his remembered lay...

Here is a passage from Aphrodite's lament in Bion; which Shelley has in mind: Awake, Adonis, for a little while, and kiss me yet again, the latest kiss! Nay kiss me but a moment, but the life time of a kiss, till from thine inmost soul into my lips, into my heart, thy life-breath ebb, and till I drain thy sweet love-philtre, and drink down all thy love. Compare stanza 26 of *Adonais*.

We shall take two passages from Moschus's *Lament for Bion* to show Shelley's indebtedness to Moschus:

This, O most musical of rivers, is thy second sorrow, this, Meles, thy new woe. Of old didst thou lose Homer, that sweet mouth of Calliope, and men say thou didst bewail thy goodly son with streams of many tears, and didst fill all the salt sea with the voice of thy lamentation—now again another son thou weepest, and in a new sorrow art thou wasting away. Compare stanza 4 of *Adonais*.

Here is the second passage from Moschus:

Poison came, Bion to thy mouth, thou didst know poison. To such lips as thine did it come, and was not sweetened? What moral was so cruel that could mix poison for thee, or who could give thee the venom that heard thy voice. Surely he had no music in his soul. Compare stanza 36 of *Adonais*.

Shelley, in writing a pastoral elegy, naturally turned to the very source of pastoral elegy—Bion and Moschus. And if he has in his memory their verses, and if he borrows from them, it is interesting to note that with an exquisite art these borrowings are adapted to his theme and to its evolution. But the point to note is that Shelley goes beyond Bion and Moschus. Bion's *Lament for Adonis* ends like this:

Cease, Cytherea, from thy lamentations, to-day refrain from dirges.
Thou must again bewail him, again must weep for him another year.

We should note the difference here: Keat has become one among the immortals:

It was for thee you kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an heaven of song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng!

But there is no future, nor hope for Adonis. Some hope, however, is held out for Bion in Moschus's elegy:

Not unrewarded will the singing be; and as once to Orpheus's sweet ministrelsy she gave Eurydice to return with him, even so will she send thee too, Bion, to the hills. But if I, even I, and my piping had aught availed, before Pluteus I too would have sung. If Shelley seems to follow the example of Bion and Moschus, he writes *Adonais* in a different spirit altogether. As we have pointed out above, he gradually drops the pastoral setting and the pastoral convention as he goes on with it.

Analysis and Exposition of the Poem :

The poem opens in the manner of Bion's *Lament for Adonis*:

I weep for Adonais—he is dead!

Urania is substituted for Aphrodite in Bion. Urania is one of the Muses, a daughter of Zeus by Mnemosyne. She is represented as the Muse of Astronomy. Urania is also know as Aphrodite, and she is the heavenly or spiritual Aphrodite, as distinguished from Aphrodite Pandemos, who figures in Bion's *Lament*. As the heavenly Aphrodite, "she here represents spiritual or intellectual aspiration, the

love of abstract beauty, or the divine element in poesy or art."* And she may well be the mother of Adonais (Keats). In Bion it is the bride (Aphrodite) who mourns the death of the lover, Adonais; in Shelley it is the mother (the Uranian Aphrodite) who mourns the loss of her son.

The first mourner is the Hour, and he is to summon other Hours to keep him company in his grief. Adonais was killed, "pierced by the shaft which flies in darkness," while Urania was in her seat, amid Echoes. It is implied here that Keats was the victim of the anonymous savage criticism in the *Quarterly Review*. Let Urania keep a mute grief, for Keats has gone to a better place ("where all things wise and fair descend"). It is the first hint that Death has made Keats "a portion of the loveliness which once he made more lovely." No mourning can restore him to life ; yet he should have his due of mourning.

There is a reference to Milton, an immortal poet who died, blind, old, and lonely when the country's freedom lay crushed under tyranny of the king, and priestcraft, and licentiousness. Milton is considered as an epic poet, next to Homer and Dante. There were poets who had been struck down by the wrath of man or god, and there are some still living, and they struggle on till they will win fame. There are minor poets who had been little troubled in their life-time, and they are not yet forgotten.

But now Urania has lost her youngest and dearest son. Keats is compared to a pale flower cherished by some sad maiden—a clear allusion to Keats's poem, *Isabella*, or the *Pot of Basil*.

Keats died in Rome, and has a grave among the eternal (those whose names will not be forgotten). He will not wake again from the sleep of death. He lies in the shadow of Death, but Corruption has not yet invaded him.

The living Dreams, the offspring of Keats's brain, now mourn him. Here is the pastoral touch : the Dreams were his flocks whom Keats fed near the living stream of his young spirit. One of the Dreams clasps Keats's forehead, and fans him with her moonlight wings. Another washes his limbs with dew from a vessel. Another clips her

locks, and puts the wreath on him. Another breaks her bow and arrows, to counteract a greater loss by a lesser one. Another Dream lights on his mouth, and at the touch of cold death flushes through his pale limbs and then fades away.

The next group of mourners are Desires and Adorations; Persuasions; Destinies; Splendours and Glooms; Hopes and Fears: Fantasies; Sorrow and Pleasures. Keats had loved them and shaped them into thought and melody. Then Morning, Thunder, Ocean, Winds mourn him Echo sits silent among the mountains and feeds her grief on his song. The Spring is wild with grief, as if she mimicked Autumn, and to both Spring and Autumn Keats was dear—dearer than Hyacinth was to Phoebus, or Narcissus was to himself.

England now mourns Keats more melodiously than the nightingale mourning for her lost mate and more passionately than the eagle mourning her young ones. The curse of Cain is invoked on the head of savage critic who was responsible for the death of Keats.

Winter is gone and Spring returns, and the grief is renewed. There is a quickening of life in Nature now, and it seems to mock at Death. "Nought we know dies"; the spirit of Keats cannot then perish. Death cannot be final, though for the moment it seems to be so. The question is posed: "Whence are we, and why are we?" Misery now wakens Urania; she is wakened by all Dreams and Echoes, and then she comes right away from her secret paradise, and view Keats in death-chamber, the Death for a while shrinks away, and breath flutters the lips of Keats. Urania breaks into her grief.

Urania would have joined him in death, but she is chained to him. She wishes the Keats, before his poetical powers had fully matured, had not provoked the savage critics ("the unpastured dragon in his den"). The critics are compared to herded wolves, obscene ravens, and vultures. Byron is Apollo the Python-slayer who routed these critics in his satire—*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.* The "godlike mind" of Keats soared forth for a while, and is sunk now, and with it are gone the breed

of minor poets and critics. When Urania ends her mourning, there comes the Mountain Shepherds (the pastoral tradition is again recalled here).

The mountain Shepherds are contemporary poets, First, there is Byron, "the Pilgrim of Eternity," a poet crowned with fame, who now quenches the lightning flash of his song in mute sorrow. Then comes Thomas Moore, the patriotic lyric poet of Ireland, who wails the death of Keats in soft melodious tune. Shelley himself is the next mourner—a phantom among men, one who has gazed on Nature's naked loveliness, and is now a fugitive in the world's wilderness. Here is a full portrait of Shelley—a restless spirit, full of keenest sensibilities, doomed to unhappiness. Shelley weeps his own fate in that of Keats, and to Urania he reveals his branded brow like Cain's or Christ's.

Leigh Hunt is another mourner His voice is hushed in grief, and he hangs over the dead like a monument. It was he who loved, honoured and comforted the departed when he was living.

The unfeeling and anonymous critic ("the nameless worm") is recalled again. The critic was insensible to "the magic tone" of Keats's verse (the reference is here to *Endymion* which was severely criticized in the *Quarterly Review*. Shelley leaves the critic to his remorse and self-contempt and burning shame, which must be his portion in life now.

The Poem changes to a triumphant note, and it is the immortality that Keats won. Keats is now a portion of the Eternal. He has awakened from the dream of life raised above all its strife and illusion, to the ethereal region where his spirit dwells in repose. He is now beyond the reach of envy, calumny, hate and pain. Let not Keats be mourned any more. He lives, he wakes : it is death which is Dead. He is made one with Nature. And his voice is now heard in all the music of Nature. He is a presence to be felt and known everywhere. He is merged into the One spirit which permeates Nature, and kindles it into beauty. Death has now been transcended.

Keats is welcomed by poets of the past ("the inheritors of unfulfilled renown," poets who were cut off by early death before winning fame—and Keats is one among them) Chatterton who still bore his anguish on his brow (Chatterton committed suicide), Sidney (who died chivalrous death), Lucan (condemned to death by Nero), and many others.

The note of mourning is now exchanged for a triumphant song—the victory of Keats over death. It will stagger one to think that the soul of Keats now fills, and is a part of infinite space. He has his grave in Rome which can be visited for one's earthly comfort. It is little glory to Rome that it is the graveyard of those who made the world their prey. Keats confers glory on Rome as he is buried among those intellectuals who had fought against the degradration and confusion of Rome. Amid the ruins of the Coliseum, under the pyramid that marks the tomb of Cestius, Keats lies buried—and it is a scene of majestic desolation and repose.

Death has released Keats from the bondage of life. He has passed from the transient to the eternal. Life on earth is but a shadow and phantom. It is his pure spirit that has flown back to the burning fountain whence it came.

The One remains, the many change and pass. The one is the Absolute or the Supreme Being—and Keats is now merged into the Absolute. Keat's spirit seems to be summoning Shelley, and he is enfolded in the immanent Light, the blossoming Beauty, and all-conquering Benediction and Love which Keats now shares; and awakened by the Universal Spirit which he invoked, his soul is lifted to the ethereal region where Keats dwells.

Any Genuine Accent of Grief in a Pastoral Elegy ?

Adonais is a pastoral elegy, and has an artificial form and structure. It is assumed that the artificiality of the form inhabits the genuine expression of grief. It is just a convention to write a pastoral elegy in imitation of the art of the ancients. To take Milton's *Lycidas* as an example, there more attention seem to have been paid to main-

taining the form and convention than to the expression of grief. The truth is that in following an established convention (note the very artificiality of a shephered mourning the death of his companion), the mourning must be necessarily in a minor key.

Now we shall have to consider whether what is true of *Lycidas* is also true of *Adonais*—whether the grief for Keats whom Shelley could not have known very intimately is less acutely expressed than it should be. We have pointed out above that Shelley as he goes on with the poem, breaks away from the pastoral tradition, and more or less follows his own impulse, and gives free expression to his personal feelings. Shelley admired Keats's *Hyperion*, and saw in it the promise of a great poet, left unfulfilled, as he thinks, by his untimely death. Further, Shelley was led to believe that Keat's death, though he was suffering from consumption, was hastened by the savage criticism of his *Endymion* in the *Quarterly Review*—he even went so far as to believe that his consumption was the effect of this unfair and malicious criticism. Shelley's heart went out to him. He looked upon Keats as one of the persecuted like himself. And Keats's fault, as it appeared to him, was that he did not write poetry on the traditional line, and so 'dared the unpastured dragon in his den.' Shelley even offered to nurse him back to health, if he would come and stay with him at Pisa, and wrote a letter of invitation to him, dated July 27, 1820. Nothing, however, came of it. And then when Shelley heard of Keats's death, he was deeply moved. Shelley wrote to John Gisborne : "I have received the heart-rending account of the closing scene of the great genius whom envy and ingratitude scourged out of the world. I do not think that if I had seen it before, I could have composed my poem." There is thus clear evidence that *Adonais* was written out of genuine grief for Keats and admiration for his genius.

Adonais breathes Shelley's passionate grief in every line. Art imposes a wise restraint on a poet, and Shelley never lets his grief break all bonds. He has in mind Bion's *Lament for Adonais* in the beginning of the poem

and even adopts a variant of Adonais too—and so Keats is Adonais. The opening stanzas have an air of artificiality, but in the sixth stanza there is the genuine note of grief:

> But now thy youngest, dearest one has perished,
> The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
> Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
> And fed with true love-tears instead of dew.

It is Uranian Aphrodite who is invoked, and we see the difference here when he substitutes Uranian Aphrodite for Bion's Aphrodite Pandemos, and lifts the grief to a spiritual plane—and it is Shelley's own grief, whatever the figure and imagery he may use, according to the pastoral convention. The delicate reference to Keat's poem *Isabella*, or the *Pot of Basil* reveals too Shelley's genuine appreciation of Keat's poetry. The fact is that Shelley's grief, however circumscribed by the pastoral convention, is based upon his genuine admiration for Keats's genius. And the grief cannot but be sincere. Shelley see his own fate in Keats's:

> Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my heart?
> Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
> They have departed: thou should now depart!

These lines are not rhetoric but are impenetrated with his passionate feeling. These lines read as a prophecy of Shelley's death, which followed in less than a year after Keats's. Shelley discovers identity in spirit between himself and Keats. It is not the death of a fellow-poet that Shelley mourns; it is an identical spirit that wrings the wail from his heart:

> All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
> Smiled through their tears: well knew that gentle band
> Who in another's fate now wept his own.

In these lines there is a note of keen, poignant grief. He feels all the more for Keats because he has been killed by the vindictive malice of his critics, and Shelley's righteous indignation bursts forth against them:

The herded wolves bold only to pursue,
The obscene ravens clamorous o'er the dead,
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true,
Who fed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings again contagion......

This attack upon the critics is not out of place here for it is called forth by Shelley's grief.

Pathos and grief blend in his lament. Most exquisite pathos is expressed in these lines ;

O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den ?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh where was then
Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear ?

After due mourning is paid, Shelley envisages the great destiny of Keats. Shelley respects and admires Keats's genius. His powers were not fully matured when he died, but Shelley perceived in him the promise of a great poet. That he is now merged in the Universal mind, is but the common fate of the individual mind, as Shelley conceives it in terms of pantheism. Keats was a poet dedicated to beauty ; so he said. "A thing of beauty is a joy of ever." According to Shelley's idea of the principle of beauty working in the universe—Beauty that shapes the things of nature—"the One Spirit's plastic stress......... compelling there all new successions to the forms they wear" Keats after his death becomes a part of it *i.e.*, the Creative Beauty in the world. The great destiny that Shelley conceives for Keats that

......he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

Despite the artificiality of the form adapted, Shelley's grief rings true throughout the poem. Shelley might have not known Keats intimately, but he readily discovered affinities of spirit between himself and Keats. He writes in the preface to the poem that was at first written and then cancelled : "I will allow myself a first and last

word on the subject of calumny as it relates to me. As an author I have dared and invited censure. If I understand myself, I have written neither for profit nor for fame. I have employed my poetical compositions and publications simply as the instruments of that sympathy between myself and others which the ardent and unbounded love I cherished for my kind incited me to acquire. I expected all sorts of stupidity and insolent contempt from these......" He imagines Keats to be in a plight similar to his own. He defined his critics', but Keats was not able to do so. He writes, with Keats in his mind, "But a young spirit panting for fame, doubts of its powers, and certain only of its aspirations, is ill-qualified to assign its true value to the sneer of this world." The more or less identity of position, the ground of sympathy, and lastly his genuine admiration for the genius of Keats give the ring of sincerity of his grief. S. Waterlow writes, "Shelley was not intimate with Keats, and had been slow to recognize his genius; but it was enough that he was a poet, in sympathy with the Radicals, an exile and the victim of the Tory reviewers."

Shelley's self-portraiture in the Poem :

Shelley is primarily a lyric poet, and he will naturally sing on his own joys and sorrows in his verse. We catch glimpses of his self here and there in his poetry, in *Adonais* he describes himself as one of the mourners in greater detail than Byron, Thomas Moore aud Leigh Hunt, the other poets whom he brings into mourn Keats. By studying these details we may fairly imagine the kind of man and poet Shelley was. It is interesting to look into the inside of a poet like Shelley.

Stopford Brooke writes, "What he was within many have tried to tell, but chiefly in vain. I will call himself into court. It is not to be said that a poet describes himself truly, for he describes the mood in which he is when he writes, and this would be specially the case with Shelley. But there is one passage where he deliberately paints himself, not in a short lyric, like the "*Stanzas Written in Dejection Near Naples*," but in the midst of a long poem and one not made about himself. And this passage, which

occurs in the "*Adonais*" among descriptions of his brother poets, is so extraordinarily personal, so instinct with passion, so unreserved, that I have always felt a certain sense of shame in reading it, as if one had broken in upon the naked nature of the man. Yet it is so true to the temper of the poems, and so supported by other expressions in them—those casual expressions which make us often stop when reading any book and say : "That is the man himself"—that I am sure Shelley is speaking out of his very heart about his own nature............every word of it is important to the comprehension of Shelley."

When Shelley describes himself as "one frail form," he may refer to his physical weakness, and also to his frailties as a mortal. "The feebleness of the outward frame made all the passions more intense than they should have been ; made them burn too quickly, exhausted them too soon. This is the meaning of the pansies overblown, the faded violets which crowned his head." He is "a phantom among men," because he has been cast out by his country-men, and he is now living more or less in isolation from mankind. He writes, "I have emloyed my poetical compositions and publications simply as the instruments of that sympathy between myself and others which the ardent and unbounded love cherished for my kind incited me to acquire." From his early years he was interested in the fate of mankind, for whom his heart beat in impulsive and intense love. Passionate love of liberty is the keynote to his life.

The world's great age begins anew,
    The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
    Her winter weeds outworn :
Heaven smiles, faiths and empires gleam,
    Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

This is from his *Hellas*. It seems all a dream to him : his hopes are far from materializing. His own life seems one of frustration, strewn round with the wrecks of his hope and aspiration. There is the poignant expression of his frustration in the words :

companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm,
Whose thunder is its knell.

These words are also charged with the mystic premonition of his coming end, so graphically expressed again in stanza 53.

What does Shelley mean when he writes,

He, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness
Actaeon-like; and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts along that rugged way
Pursued like raging hounds their father and their prey—?

He compares himself to Actaeon who gazed on Artemis bathing, and was changed by the angry goddess into a stag, and hunted down by his own dogs. He looks upon himself as one doomed for having dared to fathom the mysteries of life and nature. The loveliness of Nature which he has unveiled, leaves his heart unsated with anything he finds on earth, and has been an aching and haunting passion with him. It is

The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.

This passion is the very essence of his moral and spiritual being and seems to have ruled conduct in life too.

Stopford Brooke explains it thus: "So have I, said Shelley, looked behind the veil on the naked loveliness of Nature, and seen her, seen the beauty which is inconceivable, the unattainable, the impalpable, but which whosoever has seen must for ever desire, and live and die desiring, and knowing that the desire will be always fruitless. And the thoughts so kindled, and the wishes so awakened, never cease, since they are always unsatisfied, to hunt the heart in which they were born, as Actaeon was hunted by his own dogs.

> And his own thoughts along that rugged way
> Pursued like raging hounds their father and their prey.

This is Shelley in his relation to the indefinable essence below material nature which he wished to grasp, but could not. This is Shelley also in relation to love which he wilfully left undefined, unrealised, but which, embodied to his imagination, as a soul somewhere in the universe, which was the second half of his own soul, he strove all his life in vain to find. He saw that spiritual love, by force of imagination, at intervals. He pursued it, but always failed in its pursuit broken down by weakness."

Then when he describes himself as "a pard-like Spirit beautiful and swift," we find that he is a quivering mass of sensibilities, delicate and exquisite, which seem to wear him out, and which also distract him from pursuing the ideal of his life.

"A love in desolation masked"—it is the cry of despair that is wrung from his heart. He loved mankind, and to the cause of liberty for mankind he dedicated his poetry—and he dreamt of "the world's great age"—a regenerated world in which all men would be free. This dream seems to have been shattered now. The despair is more poignantly expressed in *Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples* :

> Alas ! I have nor hope nor health,
> Nor peace within nor calm around,
> Nor that content surpassing wealth
> The sage in meditation found,
> And walked with inward glory crowned—
> Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.

"The aching weariness that throbs in the music of these verses is not mere sentimental self pity ; it is the cry of a soul that has known moments of bliss when it has been absorbed in the sea of beauty that surrounds it, only the moments pass, and the reunion. ever sought, seems ever more hopeless. Over and over again Shelley's song gives us both the fugitive glimpses and the mystery of frustration."

Yet Shelley does not seem to have lost his faith in the redemption that may be wrought by Love and Beauty. He writes in *The Sensitive Plant :*

For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change : their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

All that is real and imperishable " in this life of error, ignorance, and strife, where nothing is, but all things seem, and we the shadows of the dream," as Shelley conceives it, is the one spirit that interpenetrates and upholds the world with "love, and beauty, and delight," and this spirit—the vision which Alastor pursued in vain, the "Unseen Power" of the *Ode to Intellectual Beauty*—is what is always suggested by his poetry at its highest moments. The idea might have been derived from his study of Berkeley, of Plato, of Spinoza.

Adonais—"A highly-wrought piece of Art" :

Shelley wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne on July 5, 1821 : "I have been engaged these last days in composing a poem on the death of Keats, which will shortly be finished ; and I anticipate the pleasure of reading it to you, as some of the very few persons who will be interested in it and understand it. It is a highly-wrought *piece of art*, and perhaps better, in point of composition, than anything I have written."

Shelley personally thinks that he has not written anything better than *Adonais*. It needs to be carefully considered in what sense really he uses the phrase—a highly-wrought piece of art. It is, on the face of it, an elaborately worked poem, in which he not only mourns Keats—the promise of a great poet cut off in early life, but reviews, so we may say, his own career as a poet, lashes out at the insensate and malicious critics of the age, from whom he too has suffered, and gives his 'metaphysical' views of life and nature (for he wrote to Horace Smith : "I am glad you like "*Adonais*" and, particularly, that you do not think it metaphysical, which I was afraid it was").

When Shelley says that it is a "piece of art," he has evidently in mind that it is modelled upon the art of the ancients—Bion and Moschus, or that it is the pattern of pastoral elegy, introduced and practised by poets in England at the advent of the Renaissance. He seems, therefore, to hint at its artificiality too. It is "highly-wrought," because it transcends the limits of a pastoral elegy. After it has proceeded a little, it breaks off from the pastoral tradition. Urania is there, but she could have little to do with shepherds. The poem is set on a spiritual plane from the beginning. Take the Dreams mourning Keats; they are but the offspring of his mind, however they may be represented as flocks, fed by the living stream of his poesy. It is but a faint pretext of pastoralism. We see the difference when we compare *Lycidas* with *Adonais*. Byron and Thomas Moore are introduced as Mountain Shepherds. We are forcibly reminded of Byron what he is—"the Pilgrim of Eternity"; this is again as true of Moore who is the lyrist of the woes of Ireland. Then there is his self-portrayal; we discover not the faintest resemblance in him to a shepherd, fancied or real.

But it is in his 'metaphysical' ideas of life and nature that Shelley leaves a pastoral elegy far behind. These views strangely compounded as they are of his study of Berkeley. Plato, and Spinoza, and of his poetical intuition and vision, may not appear metaphysical to others, but they do so to Shelley. *Adonais* is a highly-wrought piece of art, because Shelley expounds in it his metaphysical views. These views, in a scattered and unconnected form, have been set forth elsewhere, but they are brought together and harmonized in *Adonais*. In the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* there is the idea of the principle of beauty, which is a sort of emanation in the material world of nature, but which is to be apprehended by a poet's intuitive perception, and presented in concrete form by a poet's imagination. In *The Sensitive Plant*, to the principle of beauty, operative in the material world, is added love. The things of nature, blossoming into beauty, are the work of love, which is the primal, active principle. So we may say that beauty in nature is the concrete expression of the indwelling energizing love.

Shelley has been attracted and absorbed by, and totally caught up into the beauty of nature ; it becomes the quest of his poetic passion and aspiration, but the beauty of nature can be made one's own by love and that is the love of humanity. To love of humanity Shelley's poetry is keyed up. These metaphysical views, if they are metaphysical at all, are fully expounded in *Adonais*.

The One remains, the many change and pass.

The One is the principle of love and the principle of beauty. So Shelley says that it is :

That light whose smile kindles the universe,
That beauty in which all things work and move,
That benediction which the eclipsing curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which, through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The ecstatic vision of Love and Beauty, permeating the universe and bringing it nearer to the heart's desire, lifts the poet above the earthly life—and this earthly life he looks upon as one in which we keep an unprofitable strife with phantoms. And we may well understand why the poet yearns for the noumenal life—the life beyond phenomena :

Die,

If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek.

It may be philosophy, or metaphysics, but we think that it is the poetry of some abstract ideas which Shelley evolved in his mind about life and nature. As metaphysics, these ideas cannot be linked up by logical reasoning, but as the poetical intuition and experience of Shelley they will always have an irresistible appeal to the student of poetry. Now we see that *Adonais* is a highly-wrought piece of art in view of its content and matter, ranging beyond, but perfectly harmonized with, the subject of Keats's death. It is again an artistic whole (despite its apparent artificiality), in which the successive ideas are

inter-connected and fused together by the poet's plastic imagination.

We may sum up in the words of A. Clutton-Brooke "*Adonais*" seems to me the most perfect poem of any length that Shelley ever wrote, because in it he found the subject most suited to his genius. It combines music with abstract ideas as they have never been combined before or since. It is as perfect in form as in matter, for it starts with a familiar theme, and only gradually and by a natural process takes us into the unknown, moving from the ancient pastoral country of poetry to Shelley's own untrodden wildernesses and airy heights of thought. He himself called it the least imperfect of his compositions and a highly-wrought piece of art."

Critical estimates of the Poem :

There is not in *Adonais* that note of personal bereavement which wails through Tennyson's *In Memoriam* or Cowley's *Ohe on the Death of Mr. Hervey*. Much, especially in the earlier stanzas, is common form. The Muse Urania is summoned to lament, and a host of personified abstractions flit before us, "like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream"—

"Desires and Adorations,
Winged Persuasions, and veiled Destinies,
Splendours and Glooms, and glimmering
Incarnations
Of Hopes and Fears, and twilight Fantasies."

At first he scarcely seems to know what it is that he wants to say, but as he proceeds he warms to his work. The poets gather round Adonais' bier, and in four admirable stanzas Shelley describes himself as "a phantom among men," who

"Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actaeon-like : and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts along that rugged way
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their
prey."

The *Quarterly* reviewer is next chastised, and at last Shelley has found his cue. The strain rises from thoughts of mortality to the consolation of the eternal:

"Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep!
He hath awakened from the dream of life.
'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife."

Keats is made "one with Nature"; he is a part of that power

"Which wields the world with never wearied love
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above."

It is once more the same conviction, the offspring of his philosophy and of his suffering...only here the pathos is more acute. So strong is the sense of his own misery, the premonition of his own death, that we scarcely know, nor does it matter, whether in the person of Keats or of himself that he is lamenting the impermanence of earthly good. His spirit was hastening to escape from "the last clouds of cold mortality"; his bark is driven

"Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given."

—*Sydney Waterlow.*

A year later he was drowned.

The Dreams which hover round *Adonais*, the Splendours and Glooms, Mourning with the tears in her hair, Spring wild with grief, Echo singing in the hills, Urania flying to mourn beside the bier—Shelley has succeeded in giving them all being. While we read, we believe in the reality of this world as we believe in our dreams while we dream. The power of doing this is unique, and is due not only to imagination at its height but also to keenness of abstract intellect. His grip of these impalpable personages is quite certain. He creates them, and then he sees and hears them. Owing to this the conduct of the poem is clear. The unremitting beauty of the lines so engages attention at first as to forbid an analysis of the arrangement, but when that analysis is made, the pleasure *Adonais* gives is not disturbed, but doubled. And how passionate it is throughout, more passionate than most of his love poems! It is unceasingly strange, and the

Strangeness adds, from outside, to the charm of Shelley's poetry, to find him writing with a far greater intensity of feeling about the sorrow of Urania and the Dreams, about the spirit of Love in the Universe, about Keats in the spiritual world, and about his own wearied and solitary heart, than he ever writes about men or women, about human love, or about the personal suffering of others.

A new element of isolation, that created by a passion which circumstances forbade him to pursue, separated him now, at the close of his life, still more from mankind, and in that temper he died...............Had he lived, he would have once more appeared as the Singer of Man, and in the cause of men. But the swift wind and the mysterious sea, the things he loved, slew their lover—a common fate—and we hear no more his singing. His work was done, and its twofold nature may will be imaged by the Sea that received into its uninhabited breast his uncompanioned spirit; for, while its central depths know only solitude, over its surface are always passing to and from the life and fortunes of humanity. —*Stopford A. Brooke.*

The news of Keats's death at Rome on the 23rd of February, 1821, and the erroneous belief that it had been accelerated, if not caused, by a contemptible review of *Endymion* in the *Quarterly*, stirred Shelley to the composition of *Adonais*. He had it printed at Pisa, and sent copies to Ollier for circulation in London. This poem was a favourite with its author, who hoped not only that it might find acceptances with the public but also that it would confer lustre upon the memory of a poet whom he sincerely admired. No criticism upon Shelley's works are half as good as his own. It is, therefore, interesting to collect the passages in which he speaks of an elegy only equalled in our language by *Lycidas*, and in the point of passionate eloquence even superior to Milton's youthful lament for his friend. "The *Adonais*, in spite of its mysticism," he writes to Ollier, "is the least imperfect of my compositions." I confess I should be surprised if that poem were born to an immortality of oblivion." "It is a highly-wrought *piece of art*, and perhaps better, in point of composition, than anything I have written." "It is

absurd in my review to criticize *Adonais*, and still more to pretend that the verses are bad." "I know what to think of *Adonais*, but what to think of those who confound it with the many bad poems of the day, I know not." Again, alluding to the stanzas hurled against the infamous *Quarterly* reviewer, he says:—"I have dipped, my pen in consuming fire for his destroyers; otherwise the style is calm and solemn."

With these estimates the reader of today will cordially agree. Although *Adonais* is not so utterly beyond the scope of other poets as *Prometheus* or *Epipsychidion*, it presents Shelley's qualities in a form of even and sustained beauty, brought within the sphere of the dullest apprehensions. Shelley, we may notice, dwells upon the *art* of the poem; and this, perhaps, is what at first sight will strike the student most. He chose as a foundation for his work those laments of Bion for Adonais, and of Moschus for Bion, which are the most pathetic products of Greek idyllic poetry; and the transmutation of their material into the substance of highly spiritualized modern thought, reveals the potency of a Prospero's wand. It is a metamorphosis whereby the art of excellent but positive poets has been translated into the sphere of metaphysical imagination. Urania takes the place of Aphrodite! the thoughts and fancies and desires of the dead singer aire substituted for Bion's cupids; and instead of mountain shepherds, the living bards of England are summoned to lament about the poet's bier. Yet it is only when Shelley frees himself from the influence of his models, that he soars aloft on mighty wings. This point too, is the point of transition from death, sorrow, and the past to immortality, joy, and the rapture of the things that cannot pass away. —*J. A. Symonds.*

The frame work, charged though it be with memories of Bion and Milton, is from the first etherealised, and at last is quite burnt away in superterrestrial fire........... If not higher than *Epipsychidion*, this poem is more firmly based in thought and humanity And certainly it is richer in substance; for Shelley, save in the famed lines where he describes what he dreamed himself to be, and in the

sudden prophetic close, escapes from himself: and he speaks here not of love, but of glory and death of his fellow-poets and of the elastic spirit of the world..... The first thirty-eight verses, which form the lament, are in a different tone from the last seventeen, which form the consolation. They are in a style except for the mistaken attack on the reviewer) of singular and individual magnificence ......The last lines refer, not to the station of Keats among the poets, nor to his intensified individual existence after death, but to his pre-eminence among great souls—'the Eternal'—who, because they are eternal, share all the more fully in the universal and immanent principle of life. The form of *Adonais* is nobly adequate to these high themes.

—*Oliver Elton.*

PREFACE

Thou wert the morning star among the living,
Ere thy fair light had fled :—
Now, having died thou art as Hesperus, giving
New splendour to the dead.

(Shelley's Translation)
—MOSCHUS, EPITAPH, BION.

It is my intention to subjoin to the London edition of this poem a criticism upon the claims of its lamented object to be classed among the writers of the highest genius who have adorned our age. My known repugnance to the narrow principles of taste on which several of his earliar compositions were modelled prove at least that I am impartial judge. I consider the fragment of *Hyperion* as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.

John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his twentyfourth, year, in the year of 1821 ; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful ; and where cankerworms abound, what wonder if its young flower was blighted in the bud ? The savage criticism on his *Endymion,* which appeared in the *Quarterly Review,* produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind ; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs ; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgements from more candid critics of the true greatness of his powers were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

It may be well said that these wretched men know not what they do. They scatter their insults and their slanders without heed as to whether the poisoned shaft lights on a heart made callous by many blows or one like Keat's

composed of more penetrable stuff. One of their associates is, to my knowledge, a most base and unprincipled calumniator. As to *Endymion*, was it a poem, whatever might be its defects, to be treated contemptuously by those who had celebrated, with various degrees of complacency and panegyric, *Paris* and *Women* and a *Syrian Tale*, and Mrs. Lefanu, and Mr. Barrett, and Mr. Howard Payne, and a long list of the illustrious obscure? Are these the men who in their venal good nature presumed to draw a parallel between the Rev. Mr. Milman and Lord Byron? What gnat did they strain at here, after having swallowed all those camels? Against what woman taken in adultery dares the foremost of these literary prostitutes to cast his opprobrious stone? Miserable man! you, one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God. Nor shall it be your excuse, that, murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers, but used none.

The circumstances of the closing scene of poor Keats's life were not made known to me until the *Elegy* was ready for the press. I am given to understand that the wound which his sensitive spirit had received from the criticism of *Endymion* was exasperated by the bitter sense of unrequited benefits; the poor fellow sems to have been hooted from the stage of life, no less by those on whom he had wasted the promise of his genius, than those on whom he had lavished his fortune and his care. He was accompanied to Rome, and attended in his last illness by Mr. Severn, a young artist of the highest promise, who, I have been informed, 'almost risked his own life, and sacrificed every, prospect to unwearied attendance upon his dying friend.' Had I known these circumstances before the completion of my poem, I should have been tempted to add my feeble tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the recollection of his own motives. Mr. Severn can dispense with a reward from 'such stuff as dreams are made of.' His conduct is a golden augury of the success of his future career—may the unextinguished Spirit of his illustrious friend animate the creations of his pencil, and plead against Oblivion or his name!

ADONAIS

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS

1

I weep for Adonais—he is dead !
O, weep for Adonais ! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head !
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow say : 'With me
Died Adonais ; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity !'

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1. Shelley, as a mountain shepherd, is lamenting over the death of a fellow shepherd Adonais (See Notes). 3. *Thaw not the frost etc* : Death is regarded here as a band of frost round the head of Keats. If the frost thaws (melts) the band will disappear and Keats will be freed from death. 4. *Sad Hour* : The Hour of the death of Keats, personified. *Selected from all years* : Chosen from all the years, past and future. (*Hour*, in the Greek sense, is one of the spirits of the seasons). 5. *Thy obscure compeers* : *obscure* because they are of small importance beside the hour of so great a loss ; *compeers* : persons or things of same rank or standing or qualities ; Shelley asks the sad Hour to summon the less known companions (hours) to join in its grief. 6. *me* : the sad Hour. 7-9. *till Future...eternity* : Since the past cannot be forgotten completely, Keats will be remembered always. His fate and fame will be an echo, because they will be remembered, a light because they will inspire people.

Paraphrase : Adonais is dead, and we weep for him though out tears will not free him the bands of death in which he is held. Let that particular Hour, singled out from all years, mourn his death and let it summon all other hours (marked by no such notable event) to join in its grief. Let the sad Hour lament, "With me died Adonais ; so long as the future continues to remember the past, the story of his life and his fame as a poet shall be passed on from age to age, serving as a beacon-light to all generations to come.

2

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness ? Where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died ? With veiled eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of Death.

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10. *mighty Mother* : Urania, not the muse of astronomy but the spiritual and heavenly goddess described by Plato in the *Symposium*, a dialogue admired profoundly by Shelley. *he* : Adonais. 11. *thy Son* : Adonais. *the shaft which flies in darkness* : the arrow that hits in the dark ; the allusion is to the anonymous review of Keat's poems in the *Quarterly Review*, which in Shelley's opinion, was primarily responsible for Keat's decline and early death. (See Notes). 12. *lorn Urania* : forlorn or bereaved Urania ; the Aphrodite Urania of Plato. She is celestial love and the very spirit of the universe. 13. *veiled eyes* : closed eyes ; Urania is listening to a song with closed eyes. 15. *sate* : poetic for 'sat'. *One* : One of the Echoes. *enamoured breath* : inspired with love and affection. 16. Rekindled : chanted, recited ; *fading melodies* : songs which were coming to an end with the end of Keat's life.

Paraphrase : Where was mother Urania when her son was struck dead by the blind shaft of anonymous criticism ? Where was bereaved Urania when Adonais died ? She sat with drooping eyes in her bower, surrounded by listening Echoes and was hearing the sweet song sung by one of the Echoes. The latter, inspired by love and affection, was singing Adonais's (Keats's) songs with which he had glorified, and in a way hidden, his approaching end, just as flowers placeo on a corpse hide the ugliness of death and present a floral view to the observers.

3

Oh, weep for Adonais—he is dead !
Wake, melancholy Mother ; wake and weep !
Yet wherefore ? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep ;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend ; oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air ;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

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20. *Wake* : rouse yourself from your trance ; open your eyes ; (Urania was not really asleep ; she was hearing the song, keeping her eyes closed). *melancholy Mother* : sad Urania. 21. *Wherefore* : yet, what is the use ? *Quench* : cool, stifle or suppress ; *burning bed* : irritated eyes ; eyes have been regarded here as the river-bed on which the stream of tears flow. 22. *loud* ; expressing sorrow. 24. *Where all things wise and fair descend* : the blissful abode where all blessed souls go after being released from the mundane earth. 25. *the amorous deep* : the abyss of death, to which he has descended with "all things wise and fair," is as enamoured of his strains as the mourners who lament him, and will not restore him to life. 26. *vital air* : land of the living.

Paraphrase : Adonais is dead and let the sad Mother Urania weep for her dead son. Let the bereaved mother shake off her trance and weep. But what is the use ? It would be better to hold back and suppress the hot tears within the eyes and instead of giving expression to the grief and sorrow by loud lament, let her be as silent and uncomplaining as the dead Adonais ; for he is gone to the blissful abode where all wise and fair things go. It is useless to expect that he would be restored to life, for the abyss of death to which he has descended is enamoured of his sweet music. Death is enjoying his silent music and is mocking at the grief of the mourners.

4

Most musical of mourners, weep again !
Lament anew, Urania !—He died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,
Trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite
Of lust and blood ; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulf of death ; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth, the third among the sons of light.

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28. *Most musical of mourners* : Urania. 29. *He* : Milton (1608-1674). 30. *the sire of an immortal strain* : the author undying poetry. 31. *Blind, old and lonely* : Milton became completely blind in 1653. With the Restoration in 1660 he was dismissed from his office, was arrested, and two of his books were publicly burnt. Though he was soon released, but he went into political obscurity. 32. *the priest* : collectively all those who supported pro-Catholic tendencies ; *the slave* : collectively all those who supported the Royalist cause ; *the liberticide* : the slayer of liberty. 33. *Trampled......a loathed rite* : Shelley may have been thinking of the language in which Milton (*Par. Lost* I. 380 sqq.) describes the abominations with which the heathen gods insulted the sanctuary of Jehovah 34. *He went unterrified etc* : he faced death bravely ; 35. *clear sprite* : brave spirit. 36. *the third among the Sons of Light* : The third great epic poet ; the other two being Homer and Dante. (See Notes).

Paraphrase : Urania is the most musical of mourners and let her mourn the death of Adonais. Let her resume her wailing for Adonais. She must be remembering how Milton, the author of undying poetry, died—blind, old and lonely, at a time when England's glory was being trampled under foot by corrupt priests, sycophants and flatterers that gathered round their king (Charles II) and indulged in bloody tyranny. He (Milton) faced death without any fear and in an uncompromising spirit. His brave spirit still rules the earth. (According to Shelley) Milton was the third great epic poet whose immoral qualities still shine on earth.

5

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dared to climb;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perished; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or god,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

---

38. *bright station*: the lofty height that Milton attained 39. *happier they*: happier is the lot of those lesser poets who were content with a lower status than that of Milton. 40. *tapers*: feeble poetry. *night of time*: oblivious time; 41. *suns*: greater poet. *Others more sublime*: loftier poets than the poets mentioned in 1 39. These include Keats. 42. *envious wrath of man*: refers to the scathing criticism of Keat's poems (particularly by the *Quarterly Review*): *or god*: the idea of euvious wrath of the gods reminds one of the Greek conception of Nemesis. The Greeks believed that the gods were often jealous of the happiness of human beings. 43. *extinct...prime*: dying at the height of their glory; *refulgent*: shining, gloriously bright. 44. *some yet live...road*: Shelley is here alluding to the living poets who are not popular and whose works are subjected to scathing criticism. He perhaps thinks particularly about himself and Byron. 45. *Fame's serene abode*: the attainment of assured fame brings peace and contentment.

Paraphrase: Let the most musical of mourners, Urania, weep again (for Milton). Not all poets could rise to those sublime heights (to which Milton could rise). But those poets were happier who were conscious of their limitations and did not aspire too high. Due to their humility, their works have survived, whereas those of some brighter poets have perished. Other poets, greater than these, have died at the height of their glory due to the jealous attack of men or the gods. And there are some living poets (Shelley, Byron etc) who are following the thorny road of toil and hardship that ultimately leads to the peaceful mansion of Fame.

6

But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perished—
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals, nipped before they blew
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

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46. *the youngest, dearest one*: Adonais (Keats) the youngest and the dearest child of mother Urania. 47. *the nursling of thy widowhood*: Keats is pictured as the last child of Urania, brought up by her in her widowhood. 48—49. *Like a pale flower...dew*: Shelley was evidently thinking of Keat's *Isabel* or *The Pot of Basil.* (See Notes). By comparing keats to a pale flower, Shelley points out the fragility and delicacy of Keats's spirit. 51. *extreme hope*: the last hope of poetry. 52 *nipped*: were nipped; the genius of Keats was nipped in the bud by the cruel death: *blew*: blossomed. 53. *died on the promise of the fruit*: just when Keats was showing promise of becoming a great poet he died; *is waste*: has perished.

Paraphrase: But now the youngest and the dearest son of Urania has died. He was the object of her fond care in her widowhood. He was fostered as a pale flower, which is nourished by some sad maiden with tears of love instead of dew (just like Isabella who kept the head of her murdered lover, Lorenzo in a pot and watered it with tears of love). Let most musical of mourners, Urania, weep on. The youngest son of Urania, who was her loveliest child and one on whom she had put her last hope, has died. Just at the moment when he (Keats) was showing signs of becoming a great poet, death nipped that promising genius in the bud. The flower is decayed and lies like a lily plucked before its time. The storm (excited by his poetry) is over.

7

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came ; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal,—Come away !
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof ! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay ;
Awake him not ! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

---

55. *that high Capital*: Rome, the "eternal city" where Keats came in the autumn of 1820. He died there on 23 February 1821. 55-56. *where kingly...decay*: Where Death, like a king, holds his daily court admidst the beauty of Nature and the decaying historical monuments. 57. *price of purest breath*: his life itself. 58. *A grave among the eternal*: by dying at Rome Keats got the privilege of getting a grave among the great poets and thinkers buried there. *come away*: probably addressed to Urania or to the onlooker. 59. *the vault of...day*: the arched-roof shaped blue sky of Rome. 60. *charnel-roof*: the roof of the charnel house ; charnel house is the place containing corpses or bones. 61. *dewy sleep*: sleep which is as refreshing the body as the dew drops are to a plant. 62. *fill*: as much as one wants or can have. 63. *liquid rest*: in the classical sense of "serene" derived from the secondary meaning of *liquidus* as "clear, transparent."

Paraphrase : Adonais came to Rome where Death holds his kingly court amidst the beauties of Nature and historical ruins. He paid the highest price (i.e. his life) to get the grave among the famous poets and thinkers. Let no one disturb him ; it is better to leave the place : let him take eternal rest under the canopy of blue Italian sky which would serve the purpose of the roof of the charnel house. Let him sleep there and no one should awake him. He must be taking, to his heart's content, serene and tranquil rest, forgetting all the worries of life.

8

He will awake no more, oh, never more !—
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place ;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness and the law
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

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65. *the twilight chamber*: Shelley, in whose mind the mystery of death occupied a prominent place, constantly recurs to the ghastly imagery of the charnel-house. 66. *the shadow of white Death*: Death spreads its shadow in all direction in the 'twilight chamber' ; *white* because the dead are pale. 67. *Invisible Corruption*: the subtle but sure decay that sets in after death. 68. *His extreme way*: Keat's last journey (i. e. death) ; her dim dwelling-place : the dark abode of decay, i. e. the grave where the dead body gets gradually decomposed. 69. *the eternal Hunger*: Corruption (decay, the process of decomposition) is ever hungry for fresh victims. 70—71. *nor...prey* : even Corruption hesitates to deface the body of Keats ; 71—72. *the law of change* : every thing in this universe undergoes a constant change ; following this law of mutation the dead body would also undergo a change ; *mortal curtains* : the curtains of death (i. e. the ultimate decomposition of the dead body).

Paraphrase : Adonais is sleeping an eternal sleep ; it knows no waking. Within the semi dark chamber where he rests the white shadow of Death is creeping in, while at the door of the chamber Corruption (decay) is waiting to follow death up to the grave where the poet is lying. Corruption is ever hungry for her prey, but she is restrained by pity and awe and has suspended her fury ; she dares not prey upon the dead body until the darkness of the grave and the law of change confirm the fact of the poet's death.

9

Oh, weep for Adonais !—The quick Dreams,
The passion-winged Ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not,—
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung ; and mourn their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strengh or find a home again.

---

73. *The quick Dreams* : poetic fancies : the spirits ; poetic dreams were Shelley's own "ministers of thought." (See Notes). 74. *the passion...thought* : inspirers of deep thoughts and emotion. 75. *his flocks* : the pastoral tradition of the elegiac form of verse is recalled here. Adonais is pictured here as a shepherd and "quick dreams" are his flocks of sheep. 75—76. *whom...fed* : The "dreams" (imagined as sheep) feed from the living streams (poetic inspiration) of his youthful spirit. 77. *The love...music* : love which was the main theme of the songs of young Adonais. 78. *kindling...brain* : from the mind of the poet where they were born, let them not wander to the minds of her readers. 79. *droop...sprung* : let them stay from where (the poet's mind) they had sprung. 80. *their sweet pain* : the dreams, born of the brain (179) in mingled pleasure and suffering, find their source of strenght and permanent resting-place in the heart of poet. 81. *They...again* : Shelley imagines that the Dreams frequently came to Keats for gathering strength there.

Paraphrase : [Shelley from now begins to introduce a number of mourners after the pastoral tradition.] Let the swift and living Dreams mourn for Adonais. They were the offspring of his impassioned thoughts. He was the shepherd and the Dreams were his flocks of sheep. They were nourished by his poetic inspiration and got their sustenance from love which was the main theme of the poet's songs. Let them not wander from mind to mind ; let them rather stay at the heart now chilled by death. No more will they—after all they have known of pleasure and suffering—get their strength from or a resting place in the brain of the poet, because he is dead.

10

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries ;
'Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead ;
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain.'
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise !
She knew not 'twas her own —as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

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82. *And one* : one of the Dreams. 83. *moonlight wings* : wings delicately shining like moonlight ; ethereal ; 85. *silken fringe of his faint eyes* : soft silk like eye-lashes ; *faint* because he can not see clearly as he has been seriously ill of late. 86—87. *Like dew...brain* : a drop of tear on his delicate eye-lashes is just like a dew-drop or a flower whose petals are closed. The bereaved Dream (of 182) thinks that the drop of tear has been released by some dream of the poet's mind. 88. *Lost...Paradise* : the ruined paradise is the life-less mind of Keats ; the lost angel is the Dream that has lost its abode now. 89. *She...own* : The Dream (182) had wrongly thought that the tear was of the poet, she did not know that it was her own that had fallen on the eyelashes of the dead poet. 90. *She...rain* : gradually the Dream herself faded leaving no trace behind, just as a cloud vanishes after discharging its rain.

Paraphrase: One of the Dreams holds his life-less head with her trembling hands and fans him with her ethereal wings and cries, "The object of our love, our hope and our sorrow is alive ! See how on his soft eyelashes there is a drop of tear which looks just like a dew-drop resting on a flower whose petals are closed. The tear must be the outcome of some dream that originated in the poet's mind." The Dream, no more a dweller in the mind of Adonais (who was dead) did not know that it was her own tear that had fallen on the eyelashes of the poet. Gradually she vanished like a cloud that disappears after discharging its rain.

11

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs as if embalming them;
Another clipped her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem.
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and winged reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak;—
And dull the barbed fire against his frozen cheek.

---

91. *One*: another Dream: *lucid urn*: shining vessel; *starry dew*: dew shining like stars; 92. *enbalming them*: preserving from decay with the help of chemical; the ancient Egyptian, for example, were very proficient in preserving dead bodies; 93. *clipped*: cut; 94. *wreath*: i. e. of hair; *anadem*: a head-band, tiara, the Greek *anadema*, *anadesme*. 95. *begem*; serve as gems; decorate. 96. *Another*: another Dream: *wilful*: wild; 97. *winged reeds*: arrow winged with feathers of birds. *Harundo*, the Latin word for a reed, is used for the shaft of an arrow, and so is applied to the whole arrow; *stem*: resist the force of; not be carried away by; 99. *barbed fire*: the barb is the point of the arrow; (thus Cupid, in Ovid, Met v, 384, strickes the heart of Dis with his "barbed reed": *hamata harundine*).

Paraphrase: Another Dream washed his lifeless body and his light limbs with the dew of the night collected in a bright vessel. It looked like an effort to enbalm his body. Another Dream cut off her flowing locks of hair and put the wreath (made of hair) upon him; it looked like a tiara or a head-band which was adorned not with pearls but wtih frozen tears. Yet another Dream, wild with grief broke her bow and winged arrows, as if to resist the force of a greater grief (i. e. the loss of Adonais) with a lesser one (i. e. the loss of her bow and arrows). She cooled the flaming arrows in the cold frost of Keats's life-less cheeks.

12

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the gaurded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music : the damp death
Quenched its caress upon his icy lips ;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its eclipse.

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100. *Another Splendour* : bright and shining Dream; *alit* : alighted ; 101—102. *That month...wit* : she used to draw her living breath from the mouth of the poet and with at breath she was able to penetrate the cautious intellect of men ; *to pierce the guarded wit* : to find its way to men's approving judgment through the barriers of caution and reserve which guard the critical intelligence. 103—104. *And pass......music*: entering the mind, the poet's beautiful thought would pass into the throbbing heart of the readers. 104—105. *the damp death......... icy lips* ; the poet's cold lips were icy and so the warm kiss of the bright Dream lost all its warmth, when she kissed the dead poet. 106. *as a dying meteor etc.* : Just as a fading shooting-star illuminates a patch of moon-lit cloud. 107. *clips* : embraces. 108. *flushed* : Passed luminously; *passed to its eclipse* : faded.

Paraphrase : Another Dream, a bright one, alighted on the dead poet's mouth ; a mouth from where she (the dream) had so often drawn the vital breath with the strength of which she was able to penetrate the barriers of caution and reserve and thus find its way through the minds of men to their throbbing hearts. The music of the poet's thought entered the heart of the reader with a lightning-like flash of beauty. But now the chill of death froze the warm kiss on his lips which had no warmth of life. Like a fading meteor, which illuminates a patch of moon-lit cloud, it gleamed through his pale limbs, and then was gone.

13

And others came...Desires and Adorations,
Winged Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies ;
And sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp ;—the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

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109. *Others* : Shelley in this stanza goes on to describe many other mourners. *Desires* : the desire of the poet to realise the beautiful, *Adorations* : reverence for the ideal ; 110. *Winged Persuasions* : persuasion that had the power of going straigth into the heart (of the reader) ; *Veiled Destinies* : the hidden powers (Fate) that guide men's lot ; their power is very subtle, hence *veiled*. 111. Splendours : the splendid beauties that the poet had adored in his poetry ; *Glooms* : the melancholy mood of the poet personified ; *Glimmering Incarnations of hopes and fears* : faintly visible embodiments of hopes and fears. 112. *Twilight Phantaies* : the faculty of imagination occupying the twilight region of fact and fancy ; 114. *Pleasure* : Keats sang of Pleasure, but now that he is dead pleasure is plunged in grief. 166. *pomp* : procession.

Paraphrase : Then came many other mourners ; Desires and Adorations, Persuasions having wings (and the power to go straight into the heart), Destinies that elude the eye, Splendours and Glooms and faintly visible shapes of Hopes and Fears ; then came Sorrow with her whole family of Sighs ; then came Pleasure, her eyes dim with tears, groping her way in the faint light of her smile and not with the help of her eye-sight. All these mourners moved in a slow procession ; the procession seemed like a trail of mist seen on a stream in autumn.

14

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimmed the aerial eyes that kindle day ;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild Winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

118—120. *All he had.....Adonais* : The general lament of Nature for her poet recalls the idyllic lament for Bion (See Notes). All that the poet loved and shaped into poetic ideas—objects, colours, smell and sweet sound mourned for Adonais. 121. *eastem watch lower* : the easten horizon from where the sun rises ; *her hair unbound* : a sign of mourning ; 122—123. *Wet...day* : her tears which should have fallen in dew-drops on the ground made the day dull and darkened the sun-beams ; *aerial* : airy. 124—126. *A far..... dismay* : Nature lamented for the poet. The description is very realistic and graphic. The winds went round and round the world, sobbing all the time.

Paraphrase : All that the poet loved and gave expression to in his poetry—objects, colours, sweet fragrance, and sweet sound—mourned for the dead poet. Morning visited her watch-tower in the east and loosened her hair as a sign of mourning. The unbound hair got wet with her tears. The tears instead of falling as dew-drops on the earth darkened the sun beams and made the day dim and dull. Nature herself seemed to mourn for her dear poet. At a distance groaned the melancholy thunder. Pale Ocean lay in restless sleep ; the wild winds whirled round and round, sobbing in grief all the time.

15

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds :—a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

---

127. *Lost Echo* : Here Echo is a different nymph from the 'listining Echoes' of line 14 (Stanza 2). She is the nymph of the Greek mythology who loved the beautiful youth Narcissus. 128. *remembered lay* : songs of Keats that she still remembers. 130. *spray* : branched shoot or twig with flowers and leaves. 131. *herdsman's horn* : the shepherd's pipe sounded for calling back the sheep; *bell* curfew (cf. Gray's *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard* stanza 1). 132. *mimic not his lips* : Echo is silent because she can no longer 'echo' the sweet voice of the poet. 132-133. *more dear ...all sounds* : the lips of Adonais were dearer to her than the lips of Narcissus, for love of whom the nymph Echo pined away and became merely a voice.

Paraphrase : In her desolation Echo sits among the silent mountains and laments the poet's loss by remembering his songs. It seems as if she would no longer echo the roar of winds, the babble of fountains, or the song of the loving pairs of birds perched on the branches of green trees, or the shepherd's pipe or the ringing of bell (curfew) at the close of the day. She is silent because she can no longer echo the sweet voice of the poet. The lips (of the poet) from which the sweet songs came were dearer to her than the lips of Narcissus for whose love she pined away and became merely a voice (echo). All that the woodmen, (while singing) can hear is a faint and sad echo of 'the remembered lay.'

16

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have waked the sullen year?
To Phœbus was not Hyacinth, so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou, Adonais; wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears,—odour, to sighing ruth.

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136. cf. the picture of Primavera (Spring) by Botticelli in which she is represented as a maiden carrying buds in the folds of her robe. 137. *kindling buds*: buds glowing with life; *as if she Autumn were*: Spring, in her extreme grief, behaved in such a manner as if she were Autumn. Autumn makes the dry leaves fall, but Spring threw down the buds, as if they were dead leaves. 140—142. For Phœbus, Hyacinth and Narcissus See Notes. Hyacinth or Hyacinthus and Narcissus are two types of flowers—*they* in l 142. stands for these two flowers. 142. *sere*: withered, dried up 143. *Amid...youth*: other flowers which have been their companions since youth and they are also sad. 144. dew on these flowers turned to tears and their fragrance became sighing pity (ruth).

Paraphrase: Grief distracted the young Spring, and she scattered the buds that were going to open into flowers. In her grief she behaved in an erratic manner as if she were Autumn and not Spring (for it is Autumn, and not Spring that makes fall all the dried and dead leaves; Spring rather helps flowers and leaves to grow). She scattered the buds as if they were dead leaves. As the object of her delight was no more, for whom should she have waked the dull year to life? Hyacinth was not so dear to Phœbus, nor Narcissus was so dear to himself as Adonais was to both (the flowers). Hyacinth and Narcissus with faded colour and withered petals stood amid their drooping companions. The dew on these flowers were converted into tears and their fragrance into sighing pity.

17

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain ;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee : the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest !

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145. *Thy spirit sister* : an allusion to Keat's *Ode to a Nightingale*. 146. *mate* : male companion ; 147. *scale* : fly (sky-high) 148-149. the mother eagle is said to teach her eaglets to gaze directly at the sun. (See Notes). 150. the eagle with the loss of its young one wheels in circles high above its nest. 151. *Albion* : England. Albion was Neptune's son by Amphitrite. He founded Britain and introduced astronomy and shipbuilding. The grief of England for the poet's death is compared to the grief of the eagle when it is robbed of its youngones. *Cain* : the eldest son of Adam. In jealousy Cain killed his younger brother Abel. God laid a curse on Cain that he must for ever be a fugitive and a vagabond. 152. *on his head* : on the head of Keat's murderer; refers to the reviewers of the *Quarterly Review*, who, Shelley believed, hastened Keat's death.

Paraphrase : The desolate and forlorn nightingale, kindred to Keat's spirit, does not mourn the loss of her mate in such bitter-sweet accents, nor does the eagle, which soars sky-high like Keats and which makes her young one to gaze directly at the sun and thus help it to get nourishment from the sun, cries and wheels high above her empty nest when she finds that she has been robbed of her young one as England mourns for Keats. The curse of Cain would descend on the critic who aimed his dart at the poet's innocent heart and drove out the angel like soul that dwelt in it.

18

Ah, woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows re-appear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere;
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

154. *Ah woe is me!* : said is my lot; 155. *But...year* : with the departure of the winter the new year comes. The new season brings new hope and joy but for Shelley there is nothing but grief. 157. *the swallows re-appear* : that indicates the advent of the summer season; swallow is a kind of fork-tailed swift insectivorous bird associated with summer; so its reappearance would indicate the coming of summer. 158. *Fresh....bier.* the winter is dead and fresh leaves and flowers seem to decorate the bier of the dead winter; *bier* : stand on which coffin or corpse is taken to grave. 159. *brake*; thicket, brushwood. 160. *in field*. e.g. skylark: though it soars high builds its nest in the ground; *brere* : briar or brier : wild rose bush, especially with reference to thorns; hence a thorny bush. 161-162. *And the green...awake* : it should be borne in mind that this picture of the young year is drawn from Italy, not from England. *trance* : a state of suspended animation.

Paraphrase : [Shelley now begins to mourn for Keats in his own person.] Sad is the lot of Shelley. The winter came and has now departed but with the arrival of the new year Shelley's sorrow is renewed. Everywhere except in his heart, there is joy and an awakening. It is now spring and the air and rivulets are filled with joyous music; the ants, the busy bees and the summer-bird swallow have resumed their work: fresh leaves and flowers seem to decorate the coffin (as it were) of the dead season (winter). This is the season when in every thicket amorous birds are mating and are building their nests either in the ground or in thorny bush. The green lizard and the golden snake, have shaken off their winter slumber and are as active as flames of fire made to escape after being long confined.

19

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on Chaos, in its stream immersed,
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst,
Diffuse themselves, and spend in love's delight,
The beauty and joy of their renewed might.

163–164. *Through......burst* : The life-giving impulse of spring is radiating, as it were, from the centre of the earth. The wood, stream, field and ocean—all show a pulsation of life. 167. *God dawned on Chaos* : when God created Cosmos (the ordered universe) out of Chaos (formless welter of matter conceived as preceding creation); *in its...immersed* : *its* stands for 'a quickening life' of line 164. Influenced by the life-giving impulse the heavenly bodies shed a soothing and mellow light. 169. *All...thirst* : (a beautiful expression indeed); the meanest ojects of Nature also throb with the impulse to enjoy life; *sacred thirst* is the thirst for—to borrow from Tennyson—drinking life to the lees' (*Ulysses*). 170. *diffuse* : spread around ; 171. *renewed might* : reawakened vigour.

Paraphrase : With the arrival of Spring there is an awakening everywhere. The forests, rivers, fields, hills and ocean—all show a pulsation of life. The life-giving impulse of Spring is radiating in all directions from the very centre of the Earth. It has always been so ever since the dawn of creation when God created the ordered universe—Cosmos—out of Chaos. Bathed in the influx of life the stars of heaven shed a mellow light. Even the meanest objects of Nature throb with the impulse to enjoy life. They spread around in so many different shapes and spend their reawakened vigour, so beautiful and saturated with joy, in in the love they exchange.

20

The leprous corpse, touched by this spirit tender,
Exhales itself in flower of gentle breath ;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath ;
Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
By sightless lightning ?—the intense atom glows
A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

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172. *The leprous corpse* : decomposed dead body : *spirit tender* : life-giving spirit. 173. *Exhales itself*. . reappears as; shows a new form in the shape of flowers. 174-175. when *splendour...fragrance* : flowers, due to their bright colour seem to be like incarnations of the stars ; but the splendour of the stars reappears in flowers as fragrance ; *illumine death* : they give a new meaning to death. 176. *mock...beneath* : by the time the worm feeds upon the corpse, the corpse itself changes into flowers and these mock, as it were, the worm who does not know how the corpse has undergone a complete change. 177. *Nought we know, dies* : nothing dies which comes within the range of man's knowledge. 178—179. *Shall...lightning* : when nothing in nature dies, shall the mind, the only thing which has the active power of knowledge, perish ? The *swords* is the active mind the *sheath* the body that contains it, *sightless lightning* is the invisible death. *Sightless* : unseen. *The intense atom* : the mind, glowing for a moment with intense light.

Paraphrase : Even the decomposed dead body, under the influence of the life-giving spirit, changes itself completely and reappears in the shape of flowers. The flowers with their bright colour seem to be the very incarnations of the heavenly stars, the light of the stars changing (it seems) into sweet fragrance. They (the flowers) thus give a new meaning, as it were, to life and show that the matter is indestructible. They seem to mock the happy worm which feeds up on the corpse, not knowing what a metamorphosis has taken place. Nothing dies which comes within the

[*contd., on p. 104*]

21

Alas! that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
Whence are we, and why are we? Of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean
Meet massed in death, who lend what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

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181. *All we loved of him*: all the good qualities that Keats possessed. 182. *as if...been*: as if it had never existed. 183. *Grief...mortal*: even grief itself, with the passage of time, loses its sharpness. *Woe is me*: alas for me. 185-186 *Great...death*: Death, the Leveller, brings the great and the small, the high and the low to the same place. *Who lend... borrow*: Life is but a brief space of time borrowed from death, which controls it. 188. *Usher*: show in; *urge*: hurry on.

Paraphrase: It is a pity that all the good qualities of the poet that we so much cherished have ceased to exist. Only our grief is instrumental in reminding us of the poet. Even that grief, with the passage of time, will lose its acuteness. What a pity! What then is the purpose of life? Whence have we come into this world and why are we here? Is the world a stage, and if so, of what drama are we the actors or spectators? Death—the great leveller—will bring the great and the small to the same dust. Life is but a brief space of time borrowed from death. As long as the skies above are blue and the green-earth below is green, evening will be followed by night, night by another morning, month will succeed month and year will follow year and our grief will be renewed with the arrival of each succeeding month and year.

[*cond. from page 104*]

range of man's knowledge. When nothing in nature dies, shall the mind, the only thing which has the active power of knowledge, perish? Can a sword be destroyed by unseen lightning when the sheath remains unaffected? (It does not seem likely that) the mind, glowing for a moment with intense light, is silenced for ever.

22

He will awake no more, oh never more !
'Wake thou, 'cried Misery, 'childless Mother, rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake in thy heart's core,
A wound more fierce than his, with tears and sighs.'
And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried 'Arise !
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

Shelley once more returns to the picture in stanza II. 190. *He* : Adonais. 191. *Childless Mother* : Urania 192 *slake* : assuage or satisfy (thirst etc). 195. *their sister's song* : refers to stanza II 11-15-18 where we saw one of the Echoes singing. 196. *holy silence* : reverent silence, as at a sacred rite. 197. *Swift......stung* : swift as a thought roused by some painful recollection. 198. *ambrosial rest* : divine rest ; (*ambrosia* is the food of the gods, hence *ambrosial*=of or like ambrosia); *the fading Splendour* : i.e. Urania, whose brightness vanishes from her ambrosial place of rest.

Paraphrase : Adonais will no longer rise from his eternal sleep. Knowing this sad fact Misery called Mother Urania and asked the childless Mother to become mentally alive once more and to assuage the deep sorrow of her heart with tears and sighs—a sorrow deeper than that of Adonais. And all the Dreams that had watched Urania's (veiled) eyes (113) and all the Echoes who had been observing a reverent silence while hearing the song of their sisters (11 15-18), now cried 'Arise'. Mother Urania, as swift as a thought roused by some painful recollection, and devoid of her brightness due to acute sorrow, sprang up from her divine sleep.

23

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Out of the east, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt, Urania ;
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist ; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

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199. *She...Night* : Urania rose like a dark and dismal night of the autumn season. 200. *Out of the east* ; for the night, like the day, rises in the east. The night is the pursuer, the day the pursued. Cf. the picture of the autumnal night following the day in Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* (stanza ii). 202. *bier* : See notes on 1 158. 204. *rapt* : carried away. 205. *So saddened* etc : threw a gloomy shade round her. 207. *the mournful place* : the death chamber.

Paraphrase : Urania rose like a dark and dismal night of the autumn season that rises in the east and wildly and gloomily chases the bright day away. Helped by its deathless wings the day flies from the Earth just as a ghost flies from the dead body kept in a coffin. Sorrow and fear overtook and carried away Urania and she was enveloped in a restless gloom of grief. These (sorrow, fear, grief) quickened her steps and she went forward till she came to the death-chamber of Adonais.

24

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which, to her aery tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell :
And barbed tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they,
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

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208. *secret Paradise* : Secluded bower ; *sped* : went very fast. 210. *aery tread* : light footsteps. 213. *barbed tongues* : barb is the secondary recurved point of arrow, fish-hook etc. hindering it withdrawal from flesh ; hence *barbed tongues*= biting expressions which wound the feelings of ; (cf 1 99 of this poem). 214. *Rent* : wounded ; *soft Form* : the tender figure of Urania ; *they...repel* : they were powerless to deter her from her journey, however deeply they might wound her. 216. *undeserving* : i.e. undeserving of being paved with eternal flowers, as it had caused her so much pain.

Paraphrase : Urania left her secluded heavenly bower and hastened through armed camps and cities, paved with stones and made hard with steel structures. She also sped through unfeeling and callous human hearts, hearts that resisted her gentle persuasions and wounded her feet. Poisonous sting of slanderous tongues and thoughts even powerful than tongues wounded her tender figure but they were powerless to deter her from her journey and she proceeded in spite of her wounds. Her sacred blood, like the gentle rain-drops of early May, paved the way with eternal flowers. But it seemed as if the way did not deserve its being paved with eternal flowers, as it had caused Urania so much pain.

25

In the death-chamber for a moment Death,
Shamed by the presence of that living Might,
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and life's pale light
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
'Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night !
Leave me not !' cried Urania : her distress 224
Roused Death : Death rose and smiled, and met her vain caress.

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217. *the death chamber* : 'the twilight chamber' of 1 65 218. *living Might* : Urania. 219. *Blushed to annihilation* : the 'white Death' (of 1 66. above) is annihilated for the moment by the blush that revives (as it were) in the face of the corpse. 220. *life's pale light* : a faint glimmer of light. 221. *so......delight* : of late Adonais was Urania's dearest object. 223. *silent* : in silence. 225. *vain caress* : kiss that was useless as it was being implanted on the lifeless lips of Adonais. For a very short time Death felt ashamed due to the glorious presence of Urania but very soon it took possession of the dead body of Adonais and seemed to scoff at the Mother.

Paraphrase : When Urania entered the death-chamber, Death receded for a while, abashed by the presence of Urania, the very emblem of Glory and Power. The White Death (of 1 66 above) was annihilated for the moment by the blush that seemed to rivive in the face of the corpse. The breath seemed to reappear in Adonais's lips and a faint glimmer of light seemed to pulsate through his limbs once more ; of late he was so dear to Mother Urania. She cried, 'Do not leave me behind, a prey to acute grief, distress and gloominess, just as a dumb lightning leaves the dark night ! Do not leave me.' Her sorrow roused Death. Death rose and smiled scornfully and seemed to scoff at Urania when she, in vain, kissed the life-less lips of Adonais.

26

'Stay yet awhile ! speak to me once again ;
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live ;
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss, shall all thoughts else survive,
With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais ! I would give
All that I am to be as thou now art !
But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart !

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227. *so long......live* : Urania will be happy to have a kiss, even if it be a short one. 228. *my heartless breast* : my breast, from which the heart is gone. 229-231. *that word... art dead* : the very word 'kiss' will bring back all the thoughts of the past and now that Keats is dead, the word 'kiss' shall keep alive the memory of all the days of the past. 234. *I am...Time* : Shelley describes the immortality of Urania by representing her as being tied to Time. Urania finds that even her immortality is irksome to her.

Paraphrase : Urania said, "Stay, O Adonais, for sometime more. Speak to me once again. Kiss me, even if that kiss may last for a very short time. That word, kiss, shall bring into my breast from which the heart is gone and into my fevered brain, all thoughts charged with the saddest memory of the past. Now that Adonais is dead the word kiss shall keep alive all the reminiscences as if they formed an integral part of Adonais. I would gladly give my all, if by doing so I could also die just as you have died. But alas ! I am still imprisoned by Time and cannot depart from the world of the immortals."

27

'O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den ?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh where was then
Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear ?—
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle when
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

---

236. *the trodden paths of men* : the beaten track in poetry. 238. *the unpastured dragon* : the dragon is the critic, ever on the look-out for fresh prey. "Unpastured", the Latin *impastus*, means "hungry, ravenous." The idea implied is that the appetite of the critic for fresh food (victims) is insatiable. 240. *Wisdom the mirrored shield* : When Perseus set out to slay the Gorgon Medusa, Pallas, the goddess of wisdom, gave him her shield, which mirrored in it the form of the enemy and so saved him from being turned to stone by the direct sight of the Gorgon. *Scorn the spear* : the spear of scorn with which Keats could have dealt a blow on the critics. 242. *its crescent sphere* : 'Keats's genius was only in its growth. The comparison of it to the crescent moon is appropriate to the poet of *Endymion*.' 243. The *monsters* are the malicious critics.

Paraphrase : O gentle child, beautiful as you were, why did you leave too soon the conventional methods (followed by poets in general) and with a courageous heart but unarmed why did you provoke the hungry and ravenous critic who like a monster had an insatiable hunger for fresh victims ? You were without any means of defence against the attack of the monster. How good it would have been if you had the mirrored shield of wisdom (like one that Pallas gave Perseus when the latter set out to slay the Gorgon Medusa) or the spear of scorn with which you could face your enemy. Or it would have been far better if you could wait for the fuller development of your genius. Then you could have easily chased the malicious critics just as a hunter chases a deer.

28

'The herded wolves, bold only to pursue ;
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead ;
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion ;—how they fled,
When, like Apollo, from his golden bow
The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
And smiled !—The spoilers tempt no second blow,
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

---

244. the herded wolves : wolves that move together. Wolves, ravens (l 245) and vultures (l 246)—all refer to the critics who joined together for attacking Keats. 245. obscene : has been used in its classical sense of "ill-omened". 246. *vultures* : kinds of large bird feeding on carrion (dead putrefying flesh) ; 246-247. *to the...has fed* : vultures follow the banner of the conqueror because when a battle has been won, the place is always full of dead bodies and vultures feed on them. First the place is visited by Desolation i.e. it becomes ruined, neglected and depopulated ; then vultures come to the scene. 249-250. *Apollo...The Pythian* : For Apollo see Notes. 'The Pythian of the age' refers to Byron, whose satire *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1808) made him famous. 251. *Spoilers* : the critics have been pictured as plunderers.

Paraphrase : The wolve-like critics who form a coterie for killing the reputation of poets, the ill-omened black crow like critics, who feel overjoyed to see the discomfiture of a writer, the vulture—like reviewers who always try to get the share of praise when a writer's reputation has been done to death by some scandal-mongering paper and from whose pen bad taste and malicious gossip rain—all these critics and reviewers fled in terror when like Apollo, the Python killer, Byron discharged one arrow (the satire *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*) from his bright poetic bow and smiled to see what effect his satire had produced. The plunderers of poets' reputation could not gather courage to invite another blow from Byron. They now behave servilely and praise Byron, but he continues to treat them with contempt.

29

'The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn ;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gathered into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again ;
So is it in the world of living men :
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veling heaven, and when
It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared it light
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night'.

253, *spawn* : as noun it means eggs of fish, frogs, molluscs forming or enclosed in a sort of jelly ; as verb it means produce or deposit spawn (egg). 254. *ephemeral* : short-lived; 255. *without a dawn* : it does not see another morning, its life is so short. 258. *A godlike mind* : a man of genius. 259. *Making ......heaven* : just as the sun makes the earth visible but eclipses stars, similarly a great poet reveals the secrets of life but eclipses other minor poets. 260. *the swarms*; the critics and the admirers. 261. *Leave......night* : just as the sun leaves the night to the stars, so the greater poet leaves the world to lesser poets (but of the same brotherhood).

Paraphrase : When the sun rises, many reptiles (like fish, frogs, mollusc) breed. Then the sun sets and the short lived insect dies and does not get an opportunity to see another morning. With the approach of the dark night the immortal stars shine in the sky. The same cycle is seen in the world of human beings. A master-mind, a great poet is born, and the light of his genius reveals many secrets of life, but at the same time he eclipses other lesser poets. While he is alive many critic and admirers try respectively to dim his glory and to share in it. But when he dies the critics and admirers disappear leaving the dark night of the spirit to other poets who had been eclipsed by the greater poet but now get a chance to shine (corresponding to "the immortal stars" of 1 256).

30

Thus ceased she : and the mountain shepherds came,
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent ;
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow ; from her wilds Ierne sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And Love taught Grief to fall like music from his tongue.

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292. *Thus ceased she* : Urania stopped lamenting. *The mountain shepherds* : the contemporary poets. The imaginary procession of shepherds has its origin in Theocritus. 263. *sere* : withered ; *their ..rent* : their cloaks were Teocritus. 263. *sere* : withered; *their rent* :their cloaks were torn, showing that they were in mourning ; *magic* because a truly great poet has a mysterious power by which he holds the reader spell-bound. 264. *The Pilgrim of Eternity* : Byron, the author of *Child Harold's Pilgrimage*. 264—265. *whose fame...bent* : his fame is curved like the dome of the sky. In his life-time Byron was covered, as it were, by a canopy of fame. 266. *early* : Byron was born in 1788, and *Childe Harold* (the first two cantos) was published in 1812. 267—268. : For Byron's sorrow for Keats see Notes. 268 *Ierne* : Ireland : 269. *The sweetest lyrist* : Thomas Moore (1779—1852) whose *Irish Melodies* were a series of short lyrics written to traditional Irish tunes. Many of these songs have patriotic lamentation for their theme.

Paraphrase : Thus ended Urania's lament. Then came the mountain shepherds (the comtemporary poets) ; their garlands were withered, their magic cloaks were torn. Among those mourners was Byron (the author of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*). In his life-time Byron was covered by a canopy of fame, the firmament of his genius. There was no doubt that Byron got fame at a very early age but that fame was a lasting one. Sorrow had subdued all the brilliance of his poetic power. From her woody tracts Ireland sent Thomas Moore—the sweetest singer of her political vicissitudes, In his sweet lyrics the plaintive airs were rendered more melodious by the love that he had for Keats.

31

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men ; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell ; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actaeon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness.
And his own thoughts along that rugged way
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

271. *Midst...note* : Shelley assigns to himself a position far inferior to that of Byron or Moore ; *one frail Form* : Shelley himself. 272. *phantom* : a shadowy figure. 272-274. *companionless...knell* : here Shelley emphasizes his loneliness. He is as lonely as the last remnants of a cloud, which after thunder and lightning pours out all its water and soon vanishes. 276. *Heaven Actaeon-like* : Actaeon was the son of Aristaeus and Autonoe. He was a hunter. He once saw Diana (called Artemis by the Greeks ; the goddess of hunting and of light and twin sister of Apollo, 1249) bathing with her nymphs, and for his transgression was turned into a stag (male of red or other large deer) and devoured by his own hounds. 277. *the world's wilderness* : the world looked like a desert because Shelley was (so he thought) forsaken by society. 279. *their father* : thoughts originated from Shelley's mind, so he was the 'father' of his thoughts ; but later on the very thoughts, like hounds, followed him and made him their prey.

Paraphrase : Among less distinguished poets (than Byron and Moore) came one lean figure, (Shelley himself) a shadow moving about among men, without any companion. He was lonely like the last patch of cloud which, after lightning and thunder, pours out all its water and soon vanishes. (Making a striking image out of the legend of Actaeon) Shelley says that he had seen the naked beauty of Nature just as Actaeon saw the goddess of hunting-Diana-bathing with her nymphs. Actaeon was turned into a stag by Diana and was hunted by his own hounds. Similarly, the very thoughts that had previously originated in Shelley's mind, now followed him like angry hounds, along rough and uneven paths of life and made him their prey.

32

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift—
A Love in desolation masked—a Power
Girt round with weakness ;—it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour ;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow ;—even whilst we speak
Is it not broken ? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly : on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

280. *A pardlike* : beautiful and swift like a leopard. 281. *A Love...masked* : Shelley's intense love for his fellow human beings can not be easily followed by others as it is hidden behind his feeling of loneliness. 281-282. *a Power...weakness* : his power can not be effective as it is encircled with weakness. 283. *superincumbent* : lying on the top of something ; Shelley imagines that a 'heavy weight of hours' has pressed him down and it is beyond his power to free himself from that weight. 284-285. Shelley himself 286-287. *On...brightly* : the hot rays of the sun shine brightly on the flower ; for a short while the flower looks beautiful but very soon it withers due to too much of heat. Similarly the intensity of the poet's life, while it makes him live on his nerves, consumes his vitality. 288. while the cheek is flushed with blood, showing youthful vigour, the heart within may break.

Paraphrase : This new-comer (Shelley) could be compared to a leopard so far as his swiftness and beauty were concerned. His love for humanity could not be easily understood by others as it was hidden behind his feeling of loneliness. His power could not be effective as it was circumscribed and limited by his weakness. It was beyond his power to free himself from the heavy weight of worries and anxieties. He was like a dying lamp, a falling shower, a breaking wave. Even at this moment he seemed to be a broken man. The very sun that makes a flower blossom and look beautiful makes it wither, similarly the intensity of the poet's life, while it gives him a few moments of intense joy, ultimately saps his vitality. While the cheek is flushed with blood, indicating youthful vigour, the heart within may break.

33

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, and pied white, and blue ;
And a light spear topped with a cypress-cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it ; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart ;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

287. *pansies* : pansy is a flowering plant ; the word has come from French *pensee*—thought ; 290. *violets* : kinds of wild and garden flower. The pansies are 'overblown' and the violets 'faded' in reference to Shelley's presage of his own approaching death (1 300 below) and in harmony with the general sense of decay spread by the death of Keats. *pied* : having spots of various colours. 291. *cypress-cone* : cone shaped leaves of cypress tree. Cypress is a straight coniferous tree with shuttle-shaped mass of dark foliage associated with graves ; twigs of it form the symbol of mourning. 292. *ivytresses* : twigs and leaves of ivy looking like a woman's flowing luxuriant hair : *ivy* is a climbing evergreen with shining five-angled leaves. Ivy is associated with graves, but it is also a plant sacred to poets, so that the spear with ivy may be regarded as emblematic of poetic power. 295. *crew* : company of mourners. 297. Shelley compares himself to a deer, hurt by the hunter's arrow, and of left to its fate by its companions.

Paraphrase : His head was wreathed with withered pansies and drooping violets—white, spotted and blue. He carried a light spear tipped with the cone-shaped leaves of cypress tree (a sign of mourning). Round its rough staff dark leaves of ivy, still wet with the forest's midday dew and looking like (a woman's) flowing luxuriant hair, were loosely suspended. The spear quivered as the mourner's weak hand that held it was shaking due to his palpitating heart. Of the group of the mourners he was the last to come—uncared for, slighted, and lonely. He was like a deer, hurt by the hunter's arrow and left to its fate by its companions.

34

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears, well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own,
As in the accents of an unknown land
He sung new sorrow, sad Urania scanned
The Stranger's mien, and murmured; 'Who art thou ?'
He answered not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's—oh! that it should be so!

298. *partial moan* : in the death which he mourned he saw an image of his own decline and approaching death. 299. *gentle band* : the gentle group of mourners (Byron, Moore and others) 300. *Who......own* : Shelley admits that while mourning the death of Keats, he is not free from self-analysis and self-pity. 301. *the accents of an unknown land* : Shelley wrote in English though he was living in Italy. So English was unfamiliar to Urania. 302. *scanned* : watched closely ; 303. *The Stranger's mein* : Shelley's general appearance. 305. *branded* : marked with an indelible mark [with red-hot iron stamp] ; the mark is used as a stigma. *Branded* goes with Cain in the next line (cf the phrase brand of Cain =blood-guiltiness.) *Ensanguined* : marked with blood. 306. *Cain's or Christ's* : for *Cain* see notes on 1 151. (stanza 17) above. Also see Notes.

Paraphrase : All the mourners kept themselves aloof from Shelley. His mourning was partial, i.e. in Keats's death he saw an image of his own decline. On seeing this the mourners smiled though their eyes were full of tears. Shelley knew that while he mourned for Keats, he was not free from self-pity. While he was expressing his grief in a language unfamiliar to Urania, she watched closely his bearing and look and softly asked 'Who are you ?' The Stranger (Shelley) made no reply, but with a sudden movement of his hand he exposed his brow which had an indelible mark like that of Cain and it was marked with blood like that of Christ (representing the two contrary opinions of Shelley's critics and admirers.) It was a pity that such a difference of opinion should have been there !

35

What softer voice is hushed over the dead ?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown ?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan ?
If it be He who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured, the departed one,
Let me not vex with inharmonious sighs,
The silence of that heart's sacrifice.

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307. *What softer voice* : James Henry Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) the friend of Keats and early object of his enthusiastic admiration. 308. *Athwart* : across. 309-310. *What form... stone* : Leigh Hunt's rigid figure bends over the dead body of Keats imitating (*in mockery*) the allegorical figures of mourners sculptured on the monuments of the dead. 312. *If it be he* : Leigh Hunt ; *gentlest of the wise* : Shelley liked Hunt very much due to the latter's pronounced radicalism. 313. *Taught...one* : In his earliest verse Keats got from Hunt the direct impulse to write. It was from Hunt's *The Story of Rimini* (1816) that Keats caught the first notes of the style that, always growing richer and maturer, was to be his own. As time went on, Keats emerged from Hunt's influence. He even felt a distaste for Hunt's society which he does not conceal in his letters. 314. *vex* : disturb ; *inharmonious* : discordant. 315. *The...sacrifice* : the silent homage that Hunt paid to Keats and which his dead di-c ple seemed to accept.

Paraphrase : Whose voice, softer than that of any other mourner, is silenced while that person is bending over the dead ? Whose brow (forehead) has been covered with a dark mourning cloak ? Whose figure is it that bends over the white death-bed imitating the allegorical figures of mourners sculptured on the monuments of the dead ? Whose silent heart is sighing noiselessly within itself ? If he is that gentlest person among the wise (i.e., J. H. Leigh Hunt) who taught, comforted, loved and honoured Keats, then it would not be wise for Shelley to disturb him (Hunt) with discordant wail. The silent homage that Leigh Hunt is paying to Keats seems to be accepted by his dead disciple.

36

Our Adonais has drunk poison-oh !
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe ?
The nameless worm would now itself disown :
It felt, yet could escape, the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

Here Shelley closely follows the *Lament for Bion* by Moschus. 317 *deaf*: the murderer (the critic) was deaf (insensible) as he could not appreciate the music of Keat's verse. *Vie-: rous* : venomous, malignant (person). 318. *life's early cupp* Keats diead in his 26th year. So his youthful cup of life was rewarded (crowned) with the poisonous draught. 319. *The nameless worm* : the review in the *Quarterly* was anonymous, and its author remains unidentified. But it was suspected that the reviewer was John Gibson Lockhart, the son-in-law and biographer of Scott. 'His critical essay won him the nickname of the Scorpion'. 321. *prelude* : Keat's *Endymion* appeared in 1818. It formed a prelude to his other volumes of verse. 322. *one breast alone* : except the unfeeling heart of the critic. 324. *silver lyre* : here stands for the sweet melody of Keats's poetry. Now that the poet is dead his *lyre* is silent ; its strings are loose and neglected.

Paraphrase : Our Adonais has drunk poison. What an insensible and adder-like murderer he was who could thus hold the cup of poison to his lips and thus cut-short his life. That dastard (the *Quarterly* reviewer) would now deny that it was he who had done the mischief. He certainly felt the magic of Keats's verse, yet he turned a deaf ear to it. The sweet melody of Keats's early work (*Endymion*) showed what other great things could be expected from him and it charmed every heart thus silencing all hatred, jealousy and sense of injury. But it could not create any effect on the unfeeling heart of the callous critic. All (except the reviewer) were waiting for more melodious verse, but the poet is dead and his lyre lies silent and neglected.

37

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame !
Live ! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name !
But be thyself, and know thyself to be !
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow ;
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee ;
How Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

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325. *whose ..fame* ! : the criticism which the critic considers a passport to fame will in reality make its writer infamous. 326. *Live* !...*me* : no heavier punishment is recommended by Shelley than this : let the critic live a life of shame and infamy. 327. *noteless blot* : blot not even worth remembering. *Noteless* is in antithesis to *remembered*. 328. *But..............to be* ! : Let the critic live like a mean person and let him realize that he is such a person. **329-330.** *And*...o'erflow : Shelley perhaps believes that snakes become particularly venomous during certain periods and then their venom-teeth overflow with poison. Similarly a critic also gets a morbid pleasure in writing slanderous articles whenever a new book is published and an opportunity comes to review those books ; *fangs* : serpent's venom teeth. **331.** *remorse* : bitter repentance, compunction. 332. *secret* : i. e. when the critic is alone, shame will make him most uncomfortable.

Paraphrase : Let the critic live. The criticism which the critic considers a passport to fame is destined to make its writer infamous. Shelley does not recommend any heavier punishment than this : let the critic live a life of shame and infamy. The critic is a blot on Keat's reputation but that blot is not worth remembering. Let him live like a mean person and let him realize the fact that he is such a mean fellow. Just as a serpent periodically spills out its venom from its venom-teeth, similarly let the critic also get a morbid pleasure in writing slanderous articles. But ultimately he will suffer from bitter repentance and compunction and when he is left alone, shame shall make him suffer miserably. He will tremble like a whipped dog as he seems to be trembling now.

38

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below ;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead ;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.—
Dust to the dust ! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

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334. *our delight* : Keats himself (in whom all found delight.) 335. *carrion kites* : carrion means dead putrefying flesh ; so the kites that eat dead putrefying flesh. The critics (the *obscene ravens* and *the vultures* of lines 245 and 246) are the carrion kites who get a morbid pleasure in scandal mongering and malicious gossip. 336. *the enduring dead* : those persons whose names even death could not obliterate. 338. *Dust to the dust* : Shelley has borrowed the idea from the Platonic philosophy (See Notes). *The pure spirit* : is the eternal part of the soul. 339. *the burning fountain* : the radiant source of all souls, the Universal Soul. 304. *the Eternal* : God. 342. Keats's soul would go and mingle with the spirit, compounded of fire ; but the critic's soul, composed of baser elements, would meet the same fate as his physical bony, i. e. a shameful end.

Paraphrase : Let us weep no more that the object of our delight (Keats) is gone, because he is now beyond the reach of those malicious critics who get a morbid pleasure in scandal mongering. He is now in the company of the immortal deed. The critic can never reach that height to which Keats attained. The critic's soul (which is without "the pure spirit", the eternal substance) shall go to the vile dust but Keat's soul being composed of the eternal substance will go back to the radiant source of all souls—the Universal Soul which is a part of the Eternal, i. e. God. Keats's soul will find a permanent abode there because his fiery spirit is an atom of the Eternal ; but the critic's soul, which is without this element, shall suffer the death of the body ; it would meet the same fate as the physical body i. e. a shameful end.

39

Peace, peace ! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel ; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day.
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

Now begin the last seventeen stanzas (39-55), stanzas '*of unsurpassed poetical splendour*'.

343. *Peace, peace* ! : There has been enough of mourning and let tranquility reign now. 344. *the dream of life* : our life, which we take as real, is nothing but a long dream. 345. *stormy visions* : we are tossed this way and that by thousands of unfulfilled wishes. 346. all our hopes are nothing but illusions and our whole life is an endless struggle with such hopes and desires. 347. *mad trance* : a state of mind comparable to a fit of madness. 347-348. *with......nothings* : a knife can strike something that is vulnerable (i. e. something that is not proof against wounds) but our spirit's knife, our keen desires and hopes, can not strike anything concrete, they aspire for something that can not be attained. 348-349. *We charnel* : it is we, the so-called living beings, are consumed by our own desires just as a dead body is eaten up by worms. 350. *convulse* : affect with convulsion (muscular spasms). 351. *our living clay* : our bodies in a living state.

Paraphrase : Let there be silence ; there has been enough of mourning. Keats is not dead, he is not sleeping. He has rather awakened from that long dream which we human beings call life. It is we, who think ourselves alive, are tossed this way and that by thousands of unfulfilled wishes and our whole life is an endless struggle with such hopes and desires. We act like mad men and in our life of errors and delusions we fight with shadows and gain nothing. We rot in this world of desires just like dead bodies in a charnel-house. We are eaten up slowly by fear and grief and they shake us violently and unfulfilled hopes consume us just as a dead body is eaten up by worms.

40

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure; and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey, in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

---

352. *outsoared*: risen far above; *night*: the gloom and sorrow that surround us. 353. *calumy*: malicious misrepresentation, slander. 354. *miscall*: call by wrong name, abuse. 356-357. *From...secure*: Keats is secure from the stain of worldliness which gradually defiles even the noblest natures. When the first generous impulses of youth are past we become too worldly and selfish. 357. *can never mourn...in vain*: Keats is now above all mourning and he need not lament in vain the loss of the warmth of heart or the fleeting nature of youth. Cf. Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*:

Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;

359. *when the spirits self...burn*: when the soul ceases to glow in the body, i.e. when one dies. 360. *With sparkless ashes*: 'ashes in which the "intense atom" of the spirit has ceased to glow, quenched by contact with the world.' *Unlamented urn*: an urn is a vase with foot and rounded body in which in ancient times the ashes of the dead were stored. Here the implied meaning is an unhonoured and neglected grave.

Paraphrase: He has risen far above the gloom and sorrow that surround us. Envy, slander, hate and pain and that unrest which we erroneously call happiness—all these can no longer touch him and can do him no harm. He is quite safe from the stain of worldliness which gradually defiles even the noblest natures. Nor will he now grieve in vain over the loss of the warmth of heart or the fleeting nature of the youth. Nor need he be afraid of the thought that after his death his cold ashes will be left behind unlamented and unhonoured.

41

He lives he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he ;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone ;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan !
Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air,
Which like a mourning-veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair !

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361. *'tis Death is dead* : if life is a long dream (l 344) then Death has raised Keats above that long dream. Death has made Keats safe from envy, calumny and all unfulfilled desires of the mundane earth. In doing so it has, as it were, killed itself i.e. while alive, the poet was confined within the narrow walls of existence, now Death has released him from such confinement and in so doing Death has done something contrary to its nature. 362. *Mourn not* : Shelley returns to the lament of Nature for her poet already described in l 118 et seq. 363. *dew* : suggesting the tears of Dawn. 364. *The spirit* : the youthful spirit of Keats. 365-366. This address to the caverns, forests, flowers and fountains reminds us of the pastoral imagery of stanzas 14-21. 366. *faint flowers* : flowers fading on account of their sorrow. 367, *a mourning veil* : the dark veil used for indicating sorrow. Shelley asks Air to remove the mantle of darkness and fog with which the forsaken earth had been covered.

Paraphrase : Keats is not dead, i. e. through physical death he has got a fuller life ; death has awakened him from the sleep of life. In enabling Keats to have such a life 'death' has lost its significance, for it has done something contrary to its nature. Let no one mourn for Adonais. Shelley asks young Dawn to shine in all its glory and not to hide her splendour behind dew-drops for the youthful spirit of Keats, for the loss of which all are mourning, is not dead. Similarly, the poet asks caverns, forests, withered flowers and fountains to refrain from weeping. He asks Air to remove the mantle of darkness with which the forsaken earth had been covered, so that the earth may be free to see the joyous smile of the stars dispelling its despair.

42

He is made one with Nature : there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird ;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own ;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

'This stanza is one of the finest expressions of pantheistic view of nature that informs all Shelley's best work, and should be related to the *Ode to the West Wind*, etc.'—Dennis Welland.

372. *night's sweet bird* : the nightingale. cf. Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*. 374. *herb* : it is a plant whose leaves &c. are used for food, scent, medicine etc, but here used for plants in general. 375. *Power* : God, the Eternal (Soul) mentioned in 1 340. 376. *which...its own* : Keats has been made one with God ; God has taken Keats to His own bosom. 377. *never wearied-love* : the part of love in the universe is described by Agathon in Shelley's favourite Platonic dialogue the *Symposium*. [For details see Notes]. 377-378. show Shelley's theism or faith in God. This theism is, however, closely connected with the Greek pantheism (identification of God with the universe).

Paraphrase : Keats has become a part of Nature. His voice can be heard in all music of Nature—from the rumbling sound of thunder to the song of the nightingale. His presence is to be felt everywhere in Nature, in light and darkness, in herb and stone. It has become an integral part of that Power that moves everywhere in this world and which has absorbed Keats's soul into its own. It is that Divine Power which rules the world with an unending love, supporting it from beneath and illuminating it with the Divine Light.

43

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely : he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there,
All new successions to the forms they wear ;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks is flight
To its own likeness, as each mass bear ;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

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380. *which...lovely* : by his life and work Keats tried to add something of his own to the loveliness of Nature. 380-381. *he doth bear His part* : contributed his share to the work of God 381. *one Spirit's plastic stress* : the Divine Power that moulds, gives a shape to the formless material ; *plastic* ; moulding, formative, creative. A. Hamilton Thompson points out that Shelley obtained the idea of this creative force from the description of creation in Plato's *Timaeus*. (See Notes). 382. *compelling* etc : Forcing every kind of thing in succession, as it comes into being, into the visible form which it wears. 384. *dross* : dross is literally the scum of molten metal ; here it means dense impure shapeless matter which retards the progress of the Spirit, but the Spirit gives a shape to that dross and pushes its way through it thus giving the matter a shape.

Paraphrase : Keats has become a part of the beauty of Nature which he had all the more beautified through his poetry. He has contributed his share to the work of God, while the Eternal Spirit is all powerful and it moulds and gives a shape to all dense matter, forcing every kind of thing in succession, as it comes into being, into visible form which it wears. The Eternal Spirit compels the impure shapeless matter to take a shape like its own though the latter always retards the progress of the Spirit. The Spirit gives a shape to the dense matter to the extent to which it can assume it. Ultimately this divine beauty bursts forth with all its might from every object of the earth—trees, beasts and men and merges in the splendour of heaven.

44

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not ;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

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388. *The splendours...time* : the creative minds of the world. If life be regarded as a sky then the stars that shine in it are great poets and thinkers. 389. *May be eclipsed... not* : their fame may suffer temporary vicissitudes but it lives for ever. 390. *Like stars* : cf. the 'kindred lamps' in 1261 above. 391-392. *And death veil* : death is compared to a low mist which can obscure fame but is not able to annihilate the brightness of it. 393. *mortal lair* ; lair literally means a beast's lying place ; Shelley uses the word in the sense of resting place, a place where one lies down. *Mortal lair* therefore would mean the average or common level of everyday existence.

Paraphrase : The creative minds of the world are like stars shining in the firmament of time. Their fame may suffer slight ups and downs but it can never be forgotten. Like stars they climb up to the zenith of their glory and death is but a mist in a lower region which can temporarily obscure their fame but is never able to annihilate its brightness. When a noble thought raises a young heart to a higher region beyond the mortal existence, and when there is a contest between love that would keep the young heart on a higher plane and the earthly life that would drag it down to a lower one, the illustrious dead serve as good examples and shine like flashes of light in the dark and disturbed atmosphere of the world.

45

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatteron
Rose pale,—his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him ; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell, and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose ; and Lucan, by his death approved :
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

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397. *The inheritors...renown* : whose renown upon earth has been incomplete due to premature death. 398. *beyond mortal thought* : far beyond the ken of human thought. 399. *the Unapparent* : the eternal region beyond earthly phenomena. *Chatterton* : Thomas, (1752-1770), the young poet, whom poverty drove to suicide and to whose memory Keats dedicated *Endymion*. 401 *Sidney* : Sir Phillip, (1554-86,) poet and soldier, died of a wound received at the battle of Zutphen. His love (1402) is commemorated in his series of sonnets, *Astrophel and Stella*. 404. Lucan : Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (A.D. 39-65), a young Roman poet, joined a conspiracy against Nero and later betrayed his friends and mother ; was condemned to death by Nero, but took his own life, Shelley means that the way Lucan faced death *approved* (=made acceptable) his ignoble act of treachery. 405. *Oblivion...reproved* : when these dead poets rose to welcome Keats, oblivion (the state of being forgotten) slunk away like one reproached for some evil act.

Paraphrase : These poets, whose rising fame was cut short by premature death, rose from their seats far beyond the ken of human thought and in that eternal region which was beyond earthly phenomena, when Keats joined them. Chatterton came and looked pale, for he still bore the mark of the agony of suicide. The next poet to rise was Sir Phillip Sidney, who lived, fought and died in the true spirit of chivalry and who was extremely courteous and whose nature was without a spot. Then rose Lucan, the young Roman poet, whose brave death approved (made noble) a life which was otherwise blotted by his act of treachery. As these poets rose to welcome Keats oblivion which, usually tries to obliterate names from this world, slunk away like one reproached for some evil act.

46

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
'Thou art become as one of us,' they cry,
'It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng!"

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406. *are dark* : are forgotten. 407. *transmitted efluence* : light or influence emanating from. 408. *So spark* : as the fire, lit by a spark, continues long after the *parent* spark is gone. 411. *you kingless sphere* : 'the sphere in the heaven of song, among the other "splendours of the firmament" which is waiting for Keats to fill. Each poet is the tenant of a sphere, all of which, like the traditional spheres of the univers, make music together.' (A. H. Thompson). 412. *blind majesty* : in darkness, before its ascension to the firmament. 414. *thou Vesper* : Vesper is from Latin *evening*. 'Carlos Baker points out that this reference to Vesper (Hesperus, the evening star) looks back to the Platonic epigraph (chosen for the motto of the poem *Adonais*) and forward to the closing lines of the poem, thus helping to unify it.'

Paraphrase : Many more great souls, whose names on earth are forgotten, but whose glory and influence still continue to shed their light, just as fire continues to burn even after the parent spark is extinguished, rose from their seats, clad in brilliant immortality to greet Keats. "You are one of us now," said they, "It was for you that unoccupied sphere has so long hung majestically in the dark. All spheres make music but the sphere allotted for you has been silent. Come and occupy the sphere meant for you. You are like the evening star Hesperus among us and we welcome you".

47

Who mourns for Adonais ? Oh, come forth,
Found wretch ! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth ;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Satiate the void circumference : then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night ;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

The meaning of these lines is somewhat obscure and has been interpreted in different ways. 'The whole passage embodies a paradox which is beyond the power of simple expression.'

416. *Fond wretch* : foolish contemptible person. 417. *Clasp...Earth* : the foolish mourner should first gain firm hold of earth as it swings in space. 418—420. *As...circumference* . the mourner should enter space from the centre and use his intelligence until its might has penetrated to the utmost extremity of that boundless region. 420—421 ; understand himself as part of everyday experience. 422—423. he must keep his heart light, lest, when, lured on by one hope after another, he is about to quit the brink of the world for space, sudden heaviness of heart may bring his destruction.

Paraphrase : Who mourns for Adonais ? (He is a foolish, contemptible person). That foolish mourner should comprehend the place of himself and Keats in the universe. For this, he must first gain firm hold of the earth as it swings in space and then he should enter space from a centre and use his intelligence until its might has penetrated to the utmost extremity of that boundless region. It he can do this, he can understand the genius of Keats, compared with which his own is a small one, limited by the day and night of the ordinary world. But in order to follow a greater genius, he must keep a light heart, lest, when, lured by one hope after another, he is about to enter space, sudden heaviness of heart may assail him and bring his destruction.

48

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
Oh, not of him, but of our joy : 'tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend,—they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

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424. *Or go to Rome* : addressed to the 'fond wretch' of line. 416. Rome—*'that high capital'* of 155 sqq (stanza 7). Keats came to Rome in the autumn of 1820 ; he died on February 23, 1821. *Sepulchre* : tomb ; where Keats lies buried. 425. *Oh... joy* : Keats is immortal so the tomb is not of him but of the joy which was ours when he was alive ; *'tis nought* : it does not matter to Keats's reputation at all. 426—427. *That ages.........wrought* : the glorious ages, the glerious empires and religions lie buried in Rome ; they' perished because of the cruelty, sin, and tyranny of kings and priests. 428. *he can lend* : Keats can lend such glory and not borrow from them. 430. *the kings of thought* : great poets and thinkers.

Paraphrase : Or let the *fond wretch* (of 1416) go to Rome. Though the mortal remains of Keats lie buried there it is not the tomb of Keats (for he is immortal); it is rather the tomb of the joy which we felt when he was alive. It does not matter at all to the poet's reputation that glorious ages. empires and religions lie buried in Rome. These perished because of the cruelty, sin and tyranny of priests and kings, For great men like Keats can lend their glory to, and not borrow it from these so-called great men whose tyranny made earth its prey. Keats has now taken his place among the immortal poets and thinkers who carried on an incessant battle against the destructive effects of time and who are the only indestructible part of the past.

49

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

435—437. Cf Byron's description of the Coliseum, (the great amphitheatre built for gladiatorial shows by the Flavian Emperors of Rome) *Childe Harold* Canto IV cxxvii sqq. 435. *wrecks*: ruins of great buildings of the past. 436—437. *And...nakedness*: desolation or destruction is all naked; its nakedness is masked by flowering plants and trees growing over them. 439. *a slope of green access*: the English cemetery in Rome. (See Notes). 440—441. *Where...spread*: Keats was buried in the Protestant cemetery where Shelley's infant son William had been buried; hence the image. Shelley's own ashes were placed there in 1822.

Paraphrase: Let the mourner go to Rome. Rome is at once a realm of beauty and a grave; a beautiful city and a scene of ruins and devastation. The ruins of great buildings of the past stand like shattered mountains. The flowering plants and sweet smelling trees cover and thus hide the dismal sight of ruins. Let the mourner proceed further, till the genius of the place will take him to a green slope (the English cemetery in Rome where Keats and later Shelley were buried) where sweet flowers cover the ground, and like the innocent smile of an infant, lend grace to the otherwise grim environment. (The memory of Shelley's infant son William, who was buried in the Protestant cemetery, brings to the poet's mind this image of *an infant's smile*).

50

And gray walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand ;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble ; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

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442. *graywalls* ; the wheather-beaten mouldering walls partly enclosing the monuments ; *dull Time etc* : slow time gradually eats them away. 443. *a hoary brand* : an old log of wood slowly burning. 444. *on keen pyramid* : the pyramidal tomb of Caius Cestius, erected shortly before the Christian era. 445. *Pavilioning* : serving as a pavilion (tent, esp. large peaked one), i. e. sheltering ; *the dust of him* : the mortal remains of Caius Cestius. 447. *flame* : the tapering form of the pyramid is likened appropriately to a tongue of flame. 448, *a newer band* : those who have recently died. 449. *Heaven's smile* : under the open broad sky. 450. *him* : Adonais ; *scarce ......breath* with life hardly extinct yet.

Paraphrase : Gray weather-beaten walls (enclosing the monuments) are crumbling away and slow time is gradually eating them just in the same way as a slow smouldering fire consumes an old log of wood. There stands also the sharp edged pyramidal tomb of Caius Cestius. This tomb is sheltering the mortal remains of Caius Cestius who designed the tomb to keep his memory alive. The tapering form of pyramid makes one think as if a tongue of flame has been changed into marble. Beneath the pyramid there is a level space, on which are spread, under the open smiling sky, the graves of those who have recently died. They seem to welcome Keats whom we have lost and whose breath has scarcely departed from his body yet.

51

Here pause : these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each ; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou ! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become ?

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451. *these graves* : may refer to the graves of Shelley's son William and Keats. 452. *outgrown* : outlived, lasted longer. 452-453. *which......each* : which buried its dear departed in each grave. 456. *well* : fountain of 1 454. 457. *gall* : bitter and painful feelings ; *world's...wind* : the sorrow and troubles one has to face in this world.

Paraphrase : Let the mourner stop this place. These graves here are all so recent that they could not have outlived the sorrow felt by the near and dear ones for those buried in them. Let not the mourner remind one of the loss one had suffered and thus reopen the fountain of grief which had been sealed by time—the great comforter and healer. (Shelley is refering here to his own personal bereavement. William, his dear son, was buried in the same cemetery where later Keats was buried. Time had healed Shelley's wound. Let no one attempt to reopen that old wound). If one tries to open the healing wound, then he who does so will find on returning home, his own sorrows kindling up again. The tomb offers the only refuge from the sorrows and troubles of the world. Adonais has attained that permanent place of rest ; why should we be afraid of following him ?

52

The One remains, the many change and pass ;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly ;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek !
Follow where all is fled !—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

This is one of the best known stanzas of the poem J.A. Notopoulos in *The Platonism of Shelley* (*p, 298*)—calls these lines 'the best epigrammatic expression of Platonism in English poetry'.

460 *One*: God, the *Eternal*, the *burning fountain* of stanza 38. *the many* : the earthly things. 462—464. 'while we live, Life with its variety of transitory forms partially hides the unchanging clearness of Eternity, just as a coloured glass roof above our heads partly conceals the radiance of the firmament. Death is the shattering of the roof, which removes the deceptive, appearance and shows us the firmament as it really is'. —A. H. Thompson. 466. *azure* : sky-blue.

Paraphrase : The Eternal, the Absolute remains unchanged, the many that derive their existence from that *burning fountain* undergo changes and die. The light of Heaven is eternal, the objects of the earth are shadow-like and ephemeral. While we live, life with its variety of transitory forms partly hides the clear white light of Eternity just as a multi-coloured (dome shaped) roof of glass above our heads partly conceals and partly decomposes the white radiance into a coloured band of light. Death is the shattering of the dome, which removes the deceptive appearance and we are able to see Eternity with all its glory. One should die, if one wishes to be absorbed into the Eternal. One should go where all go. Rome's blue sky, flowers, ruins, statues, music, language are all too weak to reveal the glory of Eternity, though it permeates through them all.

53

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is passed from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! Oh, hasten thither.
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

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469. *linger*: stay in the world; *turn back*: run away from death; *shrink*: i. e. from death. 470. *Thy...before*: Shelley has no further hopes of happiness in this world. 472—473. *A light...woman*; (of Shelley's *A lament*: Out of the day and night. A joy has taken flight.) A glory has departed from every thing in this world. 474. *Attracts to crush... wither*; things which stillremain dear to him do not give him joy; they rather excite loathsomeness and hatred.

Paraphrase: Shelley here argues with himself about the necessity for his welcoming death. He says that let not his heart try to pause and to run away from death. It should not be afraid of meeting death. All hopes have already departed from all objects of this world; it is time Shelley left this world too. A glory, a joy has gone from the changing year and from man and woman. Those things which still remain dear to him do not give him joy; they rather excite loathsomeness and pain and hatred and thus help him to pine away. A smile is seen on the soft face of the sky, and a whisper is heard from the gentle breeze. Certainly it is Adonais's call to join him. Let him make haste to proceed there. Let no more life hold him from Adonais with whom Death will unite him.

54

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst ; now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

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478. *That Light* : the *power* of 1 375, above. This is the heavenly Love which in Plato's *Symposium* is the spiritual source of the passion of love in its nobler forms. 480—481. *which ..not* : our birth hides the fact of our being a portion of the Eternal. Our physical body is too dense, too coarse, and it serves as a barrier between the human soul and the Universal Soul. But ultimately it can not check the union. 482. *the web of being* : the fabric of life. 484. *mirrors* : 'The Platonic doctrine of ideas teaches that all earthly and finite things are images of heavenly archetypes, which have their origin in the eternal being of God, the "burning fountain" of 1 339 above'.

Paraphrase : That heavenly Power whose light illumines the whole universe ; that Beauty which is the very source of all the things of this world ; that divine Blessing which the curse of birth can not annul ; that unfailing Love which is interwoven into the very fabric of life of every living creature (though the earthly creatures may be blindly pursuing the mundane activities) ; and which permeates through earth, air and sea and shines more or less in each earthly object according to the capacity each has to realize its divine origin— this heavenly Power sheds its light on Shelley, dissolving the frail bonds of flesh (that so far obstructed his union with the Supreme Being).

55

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

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487. *The breath*; the life giving Power, the spirit of God. 488. *my...driven*: Shelley pictures his soul as a boat sailing under the influence of the Divine Power. 489. *trembling throng*: the common earth-bound people. 490. *Whose...... given*: who have never weathered a spiritual storm. 491. *sphered skies*: sky full of spheres (planets, stars etc.) *riven*: p.p. of *rive*: rend asunder; be split. 492. *I...afar*: this line and the line 488 (*my spirit's bark etc.*) are curiously prophetic of the death which, in the course of the following year befell Shelley. From *Alastor* through all Shelley's poetry this image of the boat drifting to an unknown place has recurred with increasing prominence.

Paraphrase.: The breath of the Spirit whose power and glory Shelley has tried to sing in this elegy descends on him. His spirit, like boat sailing away from the shore, travels forth into the unknown, far from the common earth-bound people who have never experienced any spiritual unrest. The massive earth and the starry sky seem to make way for his spirit's boat to pass. He feels as if he is being carried to a dark, fearful, and far-off place. The soul of Adonais shines like a brilliant star through the innermost veil of heaven and from the abode of the immortals it is asking Shelley to join it.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS

1. I weep for Adonais : Written in Spenzarian stanza, the poem *Adonais* is modelled upon the pastoral fiction which writers of elegy had borrowed from the Greek idyllists and their Latin imitator Vergil. Shelley makes use of two Greek poems in the pastoral tradition of Theocritus. The first is the elegy for Adonis attributed to Bion, *Epitaphium Adonidos* which he copies closely at times, particularly its opening, 'Woe, woe for Adonis, he hath perished, the beauteous Adonis, dead is the beauteous Adonis, the Loves join in the lament...' The second Greek poem is the elegy for Bion attributed to Moschus, *Epitaphium Bionis* in which Bion is alleged to have been cruelly poisoned by an unknown hand. The name *Adonais*, given to Keats, was adapted by Shelley from that of Adonis. Desmond King-Hele[1] points out that the change from Adonis to Adonais was an inspired piece of word-coning. "The extra vowel creates a richer and more gracious flavour. The long-drawn final syllabless add an elegiac undertone and 'Adonis' seems curt and flat after 'Adonais'." [See also note on l 10 below].

3. So dear a head : 'A frequent classical phrase for "so dear a person," the head being taken as a seat of the understanding and the most representative part of the visible personality.' Cf Milton, Lycidas 1. 102 : 'That sunk so low that sacred head of thine'.

10. Mighty Mother : Urania. There are two Uranias in classical mythology—Urania the Muse of Astronomy, and Aphrodite Urania, goddess of heavenly love, goddess 'who represents spiritual and intellectual aspiration, the love of

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1. Desmond King-Hele : Shelley, His Thought and Work (1962) p 305.

abstract beauty, the divine element in poesy or art.' Shelley's Urania is the second of these. Plato in the *Symposium*, a dialogue profoundly admired by Shelley and translated by him in 1819, distinguishes between two forms of Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, "the elder, she without a mother, the daughter of Heaven (Uranus), to whom we give the surname of Heavenly (Urania), and the younger, the daughter of Zeus and Dione, whom we call the Vulgar (Pandemos)." Shelley's Urania is goddess of heavenly love as opposed to Aphrodite Pandemos, goddess of earthy love.

At the beginning of *Paradise Lost* VII, Milton invokes Urania as the heavenly muse :

> Descend from Heav'n, Urania, by that name
> If rightly thou art call'd, whose voice divine
> Following, above th' Olympian hill I soar,
> Above the flight of Pegasean wing.
> The meaning, not the name I call : for thou
> Nor of the muses nine, nor on the top
> Of old Olympus dwell'st, but heav'nly born
> Before the hills appear'd, or fountain flow'd,
> Thou with eternal wisdom didst converse,
> Wisdom Thy sister, and with her didst play
> In presence of th' Almighty Father, pleas'd
> With thy celestial song.

By introducing *the mighty Mother* Urania Shelley has given a new and deeper meaning to the Adonis myth. As has already been mentioned (note on 1 1) the name Adonais, given to Keats, was adapted by Shelley from that of Adonis; and the lamentation of Urania for her child and her visit to the death-chamber are intimately modelled upon the grief of Cypris for her mortal lover Adonis. But there is a great difference between Shelley's high conception of the goddess Urania and Bion's conception of Cypris. The mother-son relation of Urania and Adonais robs the Cypris-Adonis myth of its erotic element. 'Cypris in her sorrow is simply a woman bereaved of her lover ; while Urania is a lofty and spiritual idea of profound intellectual significance'.

11. The shaft : Shelley has got the idea from Psalm xct, 6 : the arrow that flieth by day, and the pestilence that walketh in darkness'. The allusion is to the anonymous review of Keats's poem in the *Quarterly Review*, which—so Shelley thought was primarily responsible for Keats's decline and early death. A. Hamilton Thompson points out 'Shelley, in Keats's lifetime, drafted a letter to the editor in defence of his friend, which describes the state of health which the article was supposed to have occasioned : this letter, written with great moderation, was never sent'. It is now generally believed that Shelley and other sympathisers of Keats over estimated the effects of this adverse criticism on Keats's health.

36. The third among the sons of light : Perhaps Shelley recalled the well-known lines of Dryden on Homer, Dante and Milton : "Three poets in three distant ages born" etc. In his *Defence of Poetry* he specifically names Homer, Dante and Milton as the three greatest epic poets, excluding Lucretius and Vergil from the first rank and giving enthusiastic praise to Dante.

"Homer was the first and Dante the second epic poet : that is, the second poet' the series of whose creations bore a defined and intelligible relation to the knowledge and sentiment and religion of the age in which he lived and of the ages which followed it ; developing itself in correspondence with their development. For Lucretius had limed the wings of his swift spirit in the dregs of the sensible world ; and Virgil, with a modesty that ill became his genius, had affected the fame of an imitator, even whilst he created anew all that he had copied ; and none among the flock of mock birds, though their notes were sweet, Apollonius Rhodius, Quintus Calaber, Nonnus, Lucan Statius or Claudian, have sought even to fulfil a single condition of epic truth Milton was the third epic poet..." *A Defence of Poetry*.

Homer : the most famous of all epic poets. Is supposed to have been a Greek who lived about 850 B. C. probably at Chios or Symrna, and has generally been regarded as the author of the "*Iliad*" and the "*Odyssey*" though tradition

rather than ascertained fact connects his name with those great poems.

Dante Alighieri (1265—1321), the greatest of Italian poets, whose "La Divina Commedia" is world famous and has been translated repeatedly into all languages.

Milton John : (1608—1674), England's chief epic poet, whose "Paradise Lost" is the greatest poem of the kind in the language. Was made Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth by Cromwell after the execution of Charles I; and wrote numerous historical, political, and devotional works in addition to his poems. In 1652 he become totally blind, and at his death was buried in St. Giles's Church, Cripplegate, London, a monument being erected to his memory in Westminister Abbey.

38—45. The meaning of these lines is as follows: Not all dared that height of achievement which is reached by only a few sons of light among poets. They were happier who were content with more modest performances and yet have left a lasting reputation like tapers lighting the dark past which has been fatal to lights of greater magnitude. Greater the poet, more danger is there of being involved in unhappiness and suffering, as in the case of Dante and Milton. Then there are other poets, "the inheritors of unfulfilled renown" (1 397) like Keats and Chatterton They died at the height of their glory due to the envy and wrath of men or heaven. Last of all, there are the living poets, like Shelley himself, who are following the thorny road of toil and hardship and are going through the ordeal of tribulation and obloquy which is necessary before they can permanently arrive at the peaceful mansion of Fame.

47. Thy widowhood : "Milton's death is seen as 'widowing' Urania"—Dennis Welland.

48-49. A graceful allusion to Keat's *Isabella or the Pot of Basil*. Isabella loves Lorenzo Her brothers murder Lorenzo. Isabella discovers the body of her lover, puts his head in flower pot, covers it with mould and grows there the plant of basil (an aromatic herb ; from Greek *basileus*=king) and :

'Hung over her sweet Basil evermore
And moisten'd it with tears unto the core.
And so she ever fed it with thin tears......
(*Isabella*, l iii, liv)

65. Shelley recurs to the ghastly imagery of the charnel house; e.g. *The Revolt of Islam* x, st. xxi, *The Witch of Atlas* st. lxx etc. and the vivid description of the decay of the garden in *The Sensitive Plant*, part III.

73. **The quick Dreams:** these are the spirits mentioned in *Prometheus Unbound*, Act I. The spirits are the guardian-spirits "of heaven-oppressed mortality", who inhabit the "world surrounding aether" of human thought. They are summoned by the Earth to cheer the captive Prometheus, tortured by the Furies. The ocean nymphs, Panthea and Ione, the sister of Asia, watch their arrival.

The Earth tells Prometheus (Act I, ll 656—663):
I felt thy torture son; with such mixed joy
As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state
I bid ascend those subtle and fair spirits
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
Its world-surrounding aether: they behold
Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,
The future: may they speak comfort to thee!

Then Panthea and Ione say respectively (ll 664—670):

Panthea. Look, sister, where a troop of spirits gather,
Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,
Thronging in the blue sir!

Ione. And see! more come,
Like fountain-vapours when the winds are dumb,
That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.
And, hark! is it the music of the pines?
Is it the lake? Is it the waterfall?

Poetic dreams were Shelley's own "ministers of thought" e. g. in *Marianne's Dream* (the closing lines; **146—147**: '...sleep has sights as clear and true.
As any waking eyes can view'.

84. Cf. Milton, *Lycidas*, l 166 : "For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead".

100. Cf. *Prometheus Unbound*, Act I, ll 737—739.

Fourth Spirit : On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept.........

118. The general lament of Nature for her poet recalls Moschus's idyllic lament for Bion (*Epitaphium Bionis*), especially ll. 25 sqq : "Thy speedy fate, Bion, Apollo himself bewailed ; the Satyrs bewept it and the black-cloaked country gods. The Pans groan for thine end. Throughout the wood the fountain-nymphs lamented, and the waters were turned into tears. And Echo laments amid the rocks that she is silent and mimics no more thy lips. And at thy dying the trees have cast their fruit to the ground, and all the flowers are withered. The fair milk of the goats floweth not, nor the honey of bee-hives, but it is dead cf grief in the honey—comb ; for, now that thine own honey is dead, it may be harvested no more."

132-134 Since she can......sounds :

Echo was a sportful nymph, who diverted the attention of Juno (Hera) while Jupiter (Zeus) made love to other nymphs. When Juno discovered the deception, she transformed the deceiver into an Echo, depriving her of the power of speaking except when spoken to. Subsequently Echo pined away for the love of Narcissus, until only her answering voice remained to perpetuate her name. Echo seems to mourn the loss of Adonais more than Narcissus's. (See note on l 141 below).

140 To Phoebus was not Hyacinth so dear :

Phoebus : the son-god. Among his other names are Apollo, Pythius, Cynthius, Lycius, Clarius, Ismenius, Vulturius, etc. He is the son of Jupitor and Latona ; was born on the Isle of Delos, which Neptune raised from of the bottom of

the sea as a refuge for Latona, who was persecuted by Juno, Phoebus or Apollo became the god of the arts, of medicine, music, poetry and eloquence. Phoebus loved **Hyacinthus** (a remarkably beautiful youth). Hyacinthus was also loved by Zephyrus (the west wind). Hyacinthus returned the love of Phoebus. Thie made Zephyrus jealous, As Hyacinthus was once playing at quoit with Phoebus, Zephyrus, out of jealousy, caused the quoite (a sharp-edged iron ring for throwing at a mark in the game of quoits) of Phoebus to strike the head of the youth and kill him on the spot. From the blood of Hyacinthus grew the flower of the same name (hyacinth—a bell shaped flower of purple blue colour) whose leaves were marked with the words AI, AI, (woe, woe.)

141 Nor to himself Narcissus : Narcissus : a beautiful youth, son of the river god Cephisus. The nymph Echo (note on ll 132—134 above) fell in love with him, but he did not return her passion. To avenge this offence, Venus caused him to become enamoured of his own reflection in the waters of a fountain. Unable to possess himself of this shadow, he at last killed himself. After his death he was changed into the flower which bears his name.

So the meaning of ll 140—142. is : Adonais is dearer to the flowers to which Hyacinthus and Narcissus give their names than Hyacinthus to Phoebus or Narcissus to himself. That is why they (the flowers) stand with faded colour and withered petals amid their drooping companions.

147-149. Not so the eagle, who like...morning : 'the simile is a reminiscence of the picture in Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, ll 49 sqq., of the vultures, wild with grief for the loss of their young, wheeling in circle high above their nest. It is combined, however, with the rememberance of this passage in Milton, *Areopagitica*, where an awakening nation is likened to "an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam."

154. The thought in this stanza (18) and the two following stanzas (19, 20) has been borrowed from Mochus's *Epitaphium*

Bionis ll 106 sqq : "Alas ! when the mallows die in the garden, and the green parsley and the twining anise with its bloom, they live again and grow another year. But we men, the great and strong and wise, as soon as we die, deaf in the hollow earth we sleep well, ay, a long unending sleep that knows no waking."

191-193. 'Wake thou...sighs' : These lines have been adapted from Bion's lament for Adonis. (*Idyll* I, ll 16, 17) : "Cruel, cruel is the wound that Adonis hath in his thigh, but deeper is the wound that Cytherea beareth at her heart."

208. Her secret Paradise : A paradise is literally an enclosed space, a park. "Secret" is used in its literal classical sense of "set apart, remote."

She sped : The picture is again taken from Bion's lament for Adonis : "But Aphrodite, with her tresses unbound, wanders through the oak-woods full of grief, unkempt, with bare feet ; and the brambles wound her as she goes and cause her sacred blood to flow. But shrilly wailing she speeds through the longs glens, crying out for her Assyrian lover and calling, calling." Bion's mourner is mortal, whereas Shelley spiritualises the whole picture by introducing Urania.

226. The lament is again based on Bion's lament for Adonis, *Idyll* I, 40 sqq. : "When she saw, when she perceived the wound of Adonis that might not be stanched, when she saw the purple blood about his pallid thigh, she stretched out her arms and wailed, "Stay, Adions ! stay, hapless Adonis, that I may reach thee for the last last time, that I may embrace thee and press my lips to thine. Wake a while, Adonis, and give me now the last kiss. Kiss me so long as a kiss can live, until thy spirit flow from thy soul to my mouth and to my heart-strings, until I drink in thy sweet love-potion and quaff love to the dregs and may keep this kiss as it were thyself, Adonis, now that, ill fated one, thou art passing from me, passing for long, Adonis, and going into Acheron to the loathed and cruel king, while I, poor wretch, live and am a goddess and cannot follow thee."

235. O gentle Child etc : This stanza is founded on Bion. *Idyll* I, ll 60-61 : "Why, daring one, didst thou go a-hunting ? Why, beautiful as thou wert, wert thou so mad as to contend with the beast ?

240. Wisdom the mirrored shield : When Perseus set out to slay the Gorgon Medusa, Pallas, the goddess of wisdom gave him her shield, which mirrored in it the form the enemy and so saved him from being turned to stone by the direct sight of the dread Medusa reflected in the brazen shield which his left arm carried. Bacon, in *Wisdom of the Ancients*, VII, speaks of the shield and mirror as two separate things. Keats lacked the protecting shield of wisdom, the power of forestalling the attack of his opponent. He did not have the spear of scorn with which he could transfix the adverse critic. Thus he was absolutely defenceless.

Perseus : son of Jupiter and Danae. One of the first achievements of his manhood was to slay the Gorgon Medusa, and bring the head to Polydectes, who had set Perseus the task in the hope of getting rid of him Obtaining Pluto's helmet, which rendered him invisible, and other aids from other gods and goddesses (which included Pallas's shield), he flew through the air to the land of the Gorgons. Finding the Gorgons asleep, he was able to cut off Medusa's head, and flew away with it, reaching the court of Polydectes in time to save his mother Danae from falling into his toils. Perseus married Andromeda, whom he had rescued from death in Ethiopia.

Gorgons : In Greek mythology one comes across three snake-haired women whose look petrified the beholder. *Medusa* was one of them.

245. Obscene : has been used here in its classical sense of "ill-omened". Ravens were among the birds from whose flight sooth sayers (augurs) took omens of the future. (Raven =a large black bird of crow kind.) Marlowe in *Jew of Malta* II, 1—4 refers to

> The sad presaging raven, that tolls
> The sick man's passport in her hollow beak,
> And in the shadow of the silent night
> Doth shake contagion from her sable wings.

In line **248** *whose wings rain contagion*: is a direct reminiscence of the passage quoted above. But it has been applied not to the *ravens* but to the *vultures*.

250. The Pythian : 'Applo was called Pythius in connection with his chief sanctuary at Delphi, where he slew with his arrows the serpent Python.'

"The Pythian of the age" is a compliment to Byron, whose satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1808), had been the first work which won him fame. (see note on l 264 below).

262 (stanza 30) : Here ends the lament of Urania- (stanzas 25-29). Some critics have rightly pointed out that Urania's lament forms the climax of the invocations in the Greek pastoral style. 'With the end of her lamentations, we are quietly brought back to the real world.' **The mountain shepherds** : the imaginary procession of shepherds has its origin in Theocritus, *Idyll* I, 76 : the herdsmen came, the shepherds, goat herds came.

264 The Pilgrim of Eternity : Byron, George Gordon (1788-1824) : poet, was born in London. From his birth he suffered from a malformation of the feet, causing a slight lameness, which was a cause of lifelong misery to him, aggravated by the knowledge that with proper care it might have been cured. Byron's mother was a capricious woman of violent temper, with no fitness for guiding her "volcanic son" and this accounts for the spirit of revolt which became Byron's life-long characteristic. In 1801 he was sent to Harrow, where he remained until 1805, when he proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he read much history and fiction, lived extravagantly, and got into debt. In 1807 he published *Hours of Idleness*, which was savagely attacked in the *Edinburgh Review*. In reply he sent forth *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) which created considerable stire and shortly went through five editions. In 1809 he left England and passing through Spain, went to Greece. During his absence, which extended over two years, he wrote the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, which were published after his return in 1812, and were received

with accalamation. In his own words "he awoke one morning and found himself famous."

In 1816 separation from his wife and financial difficulties made him leave England for ever. Passing through Belgium and up the Rhine, Byron went to Geneva afterwards travelling with Shelley through Switzerland, he wrote the third canto of *Childe Harold*. In 1817 he was in Rome, whence returning to Venice he wrote the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*. His last Italian home was Genoa, where he lived until 1823. Then he offered himself as an ally to the Greek insurgents. In July, 1823, he started for Greece. In January, 1824, he landed at Missolonghi, but caught a malarial fever, of which he died on April 19, 1824.

267-268. Though Shelley has chosen Byron and Moore as the first two mourners among the contemporary poets, neither of these two had any genuine sympathy for Keats. Byron's sorrow for Keats's death was actually confined to the surprise which he felt on hearing from Shelley that the article in the *Quarterly* hastened the death of Keats. He wrote to Shelley from Ravenna, 26 April 1821 : "I am very sorry to hear what you say of Keats—is it *actually true* ? I did not think criticism had been so killing. Though I differ from you essentially in your estimate of his performances, I so much abhor all unnecessary pain, that I would rather he had been seated on the highest peak of Parnassus than have perished in such a manner. Poor fellow ! though with such inordinate self-love he would probably not have been very happy." In the same letter he speaks at Keats's verse as belonging to "*that second-hand* school of poetry", but adds, "Had I known that Keats was dead—or that he was alive and so sensitive—I should have omitted some remarks upon his poetry, to which I was provoked by his *attack* upon *Pope*, and my disapprobation of his own style of writing." To Moore he wrote on 14 May 1821 : "Did you know John Keats ? They say that he was killed by a review of him in the *Quarterly*—if he be dead, which I really don't know. I don't understand this *yielding* sensitiveness," Shelley, on 26 August 1821, told Leigh Hunt that Byron, though "loud in his praise of *Prometheus*," said nothing about *Adonais*, "I suppose from modesty on account of his being mentioned

in it." Byron expressed the same surprise (as shown in the letters mentioned above) in the well-known stanza of *Don Juan* (XI, IX) on "John Keats, who was killed off by one critique." This was written two years later.

Keats also had no genuine regard for Byron. About Byron he was reported as saying, "How horrible an example of human nature is this man who has no pleasure left him but to gloat over and jeer at the most awful incidents of life." Byron, in his letter to Murray, written on 4 Nov. 1820 made the following unhappy remark about Keats—"the *outstretched* poesy of this miserable Self-polluter of the human mind."

269. The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong :

Thomas Moore (1779-1852) : poet, was born in Dublin. He was the son of a grocer and wine merchant. He was educated at Trinity College, after which he went to London, and studied law at the Middle Temple, 1799. He took with him a translation of *Anacreon*, which appeared, dedicated to the Prince Regent, 1800, was well received and made a position for him. In the following year appeared *Poems by Thomas Little*. In 1803 he travelled in America.

The literary fruit of this journey was *Epistles, Odes, and other Poems* (1806). In 1807 Moore found his true poetic vocation in his *Irish Melodies*—the music being furnished by Sir John Stevenson, who adapted the national airs. The reception they met with was enthusiastic and Moore was carried at once to the height of his reputation. They continued to appear over a period of 25 years and for each of the 130 songs he received 100 guineas. His charming singing of these airs, and his fascinating conversational and social powers made him sought after in the highest circles. In 1818 he travelled in Italy with Lord John Russell and visited Byron. On the death of Byron his memoirs came into the hands of Moore, who, in the exercise of a discretion committed to him, destroyed them. He afterwards wrote *Life of Byron* (1830), which gave rise to much criticism and controversy. He also wrote Lives of Sheridan and Lord Edward Fitzgerald. "Few poets have ever enjoyed greater

popularity with the public or the friendship of more men distinguished in all departments of life. This latter was largely owing to his brilliant social qualities, but his genuine and independent character had also a large share in it.'

306. Cain's or Christ's :

'The two names form an antithesis. To those who regarded Shelley as an atheist and revolutionary he bore the brand of the murderer Cain, wandering restlessly over the earth. Others regarded him as a reformer and preacher of idealistic doctrine, and to these the bleeding brow recalls that of divine Reformer, whom Shelley, though an opponent of the Christian dogmatic system, reverenced deeply as a man.'

307. What softer voice : James Henry Leigh Hunt (1784—1859)—Essayist and poet, was born at Southgate and was educated at Christ's Hospital. In 1805 he joined his brother John in conducting a paper, the *News*, which the latter had started. Thereafter the brothers embarked upon the *Examiner*, a paper of pronounced Radical views. The appearance in this journal of an article on the Prince Regent in which he was described in words which have been condensed into 'a fat Adonis of fifty,' led to Hunt being fined £ 500, and imprisoned for two years. With his customary genial philosophy, however, the prisoner made the best of things, turned his cell into a study, with book cases and a piano and his yard into a garden. He had the sympathy of many, and received his friends, including Byron, Moore and Lamb. On his release he published his poem, *The Story of Rimini*. In 1822 Hunt went to Italy with Byron. Soon he was disillusioned with Byron and on returning home published *Byron and his Contemporaries*—a work which gave great offence to Byron's friends, who accused the author of ingratitude. 'Although his poems have considerable descriptive power and brightness, he had not the depth and intensity to make a poet, and his reputation rests rater upon his essays, which are full of a genial philosophy.'

Keats's earlier works were influenced by Hunt's philosophy. Keats's first work—some sonnets—appeared in

Hunt's *Examiner*, Hunt was in the beginning an object of Keats's enthusiastic admiration. As time went on, however, Keat's emerged from his influence and felt a distaste for his society which he does not conceal in his letters.

Hunt's pronounced radicalism endeared him to Shelley and obscured the manifold faults of his poetry. Shelley (*Letter to Maria Gisborne*, ll 209-12) calls Hunt :

> One of those happy souls
>
> Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
> The world would smell like what it is---a tomb ;
> Who is, what others seem.

316. Shelley prefixed to his preface to *Adonais* the four lines on which this stanza is founded, from the *Epitaphium Bionis*, ll 116-120. His text, however, differs in several points from the text as received at present. "Poison has touched thy mouth, Bion, thou hast seen poison. How did it reach thy lips and grew not sweet ? What mortal was there so unkind as to mix the poison for thee or give it thee, that heard thy voice and missed thy poesy ?"

338-342. Dust to dust...shame : 'The Platonic Philosophy distinguishes between the eternal and indivisible source of things, which is, and the temporary and manifold objects of the universe, which *become*-i.e. between what is real and permanent, and what is apparent and transitory. In the doctrine of creation allegorically expounded in the *Timaeus*, the soul is compounded partly of the eternal substance and partly of the secondary and bodily material. The "pure spirit" is the eternal part of the soul, the intellect, "that alone which knows" of l. 177 above. See also l. 179, where the spirit, compounded fire, of the first of the elements, is called "the intense atom." Keats's fiery spirit is an atom of the eternal : his critic is without this element, and his soul suffers the death of his body.'— A.H. Thompson.

377. never-wearied love : The part of love in the universe is described by Agathon in Shelley's favourite Platonic dialogue the *Symposium*. Love (Eros), he says, is the first, most beautiful and best of the gods, and is the cause of

beauty and goodness in all things. "He it is who banishes unkindness from us and fills us with kindness, who, taking the lead in festivals, dances, sacrifices, orders all such assemblies of ourselves with one another. He gives gentleness, and sets harshness afar off. He loves to give good-will and has no enmity to give. He is easily entreated of the good, plain to the sight of the wise man, an object of glory of the gods, of envy to the hapless, of possession to the fortunate. He is the father of delicacy, luxury, daintiness, pleasure, desire, longing. His care is far good, not for evil. In labour, in fear, in longing, in speech he is the best pilot, the best fighting man of the crew, comrade, and deliverer, the ordering principle of all goods and men, the fairest and best general, whom every man must follow with sweet chanting, each taking his share in the beauteous song which he sings to soothe the heart of all, both gods and men."

381. the one Spirit's plastic stress : Shelley obtained this idea from the description of creation in Plato's *Timaeus* (30 A) : "For, since God wished all things to be good, and nothing, so far as possible, to be bad, he therefore took to himself everything that was visible not while it was at rest, but while it was moving about discordantly and disorderly, and out of disorder brought it into order, considering that the second was better than the first."

399 Chatterton : Thomas, (1752-1770), poet, born at Bristol, was pothumous son of a schoolmaster, who had been a man of some reading and antiquarian tastes. A black letter Bible and an illuminated music-book belonging to his mother were the first things to give his mind the impulse which led to such mingled glory and disaster. At 14 he was apprenticed to a solicitor named Lambert. Then a chain of misfortunes followed. He went on writing poems, satires and political papers but funds and spirits failed, he was starving, and the failure to obtain an appointment as ship's surgeon, for which he had applied, drove him to disperation, and on the morning of August 25, 1770, he was found dead from a dose of arsenic, surrounded by his writings torn into small pieces. From childhood Chatterton had shown a morbid familiarity with the idea of suicide. "The magnitude of his

tragedy is only realised when it is considered not only that the poetry he left was of a high order of originality and imaginative power, but that it was produced *at an age at which our greatest poets, had they died, would have remained unknown.*"

401. Sidney : Sir Philip Sidney (1554—86), poet and romanticist was the son of Sir Henry Sidney. He became a friend of Spenser, who dedicated to him his *Shepherds Calendar*. In 1585 he was engaged in the war in the Low Countries and met his death at Zutphen from a wound in the thigh. His death was commemorated by Spenser in his *Astrophel*, 'Sidney has always been considered as the type of English chivalry ; and his extraordinary contemporary reputation rested on his personal qualities of nobility and generosity.' His writings consist of his famous pastoral romance of *Arcadia*, his sonnet *Astrophel and Stella* and his *Apologie for Poetrie*, afterwards called *Defence of Poesie.*

404. Lucan : 'Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (A. D. 39—65), the nephew of the philosopher Seneca and author of the *Pharsalia*, joined the conspiracy of Piso against Nero and turning informer, betrayed his accomplices, including his own mother. This, however, did not spare his life, and, to escape execution, he had his veins opened in a bath, and died of loss of blood, reciting some of his own verses appropriate to his situation. Shelley means that the coolness with which he met death approved a life which was otherwise blotted by his act af treachery.'

439 a slop of gren access : Shelley described the English cemetery in Rome, where his own heart was to lie, in a letter of 22 Dec., 1818, to Peacock :

'The English burying place is a green slope near the walls, under the pyramidal tomb of Cestius, and is I think, the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld. To see the sun shining on its bright grass, fresh when we first visited it, with the autumnal dews, and hear the whispering of the wind among the leaves of the trees which have overgrown the tomb of Cestius, and the soil which is stirring in

the sun-warm earth, and to mark the tombs, mostly of women and young people who were buried there, one might, if one were to die, desire the sleep they seem to sleep.'

Stanza 52 : '*Many-coloured* (**l 462**) here means more than *multi-coloured* ; by deliberately picking up the *many* of l 460 it contrasts the transience of earthly, mortal beauty with the infinite *white radiance of Eternity* which is revealed only in its entirety by death but which, in a diffused form, filters through the *dome* into the world of nature. For a fuller examination of the Platonic and symbolic significance of this poem see both Carlos Baker and Noville Rogers.'—Dennis Welland.

N. B There is an excellent interpretation of this memorable stanza (52) in Desmond King-Hele's *Shelley His Thought and Work* (1962). pages 309—311.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. 1 How did Shelley react to his age—an age of revolution, followed by reaction ?

Ans. See *Shelley and his Age.* The following points may be noted :—

(1) Shelley was a revolutionary by his temperament and outlook. Secondly, he was born to the heritage of the French Revolution. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge were inspired by the French Revolution in the beginning, but later they turned reactionary. No such change took place in Shelley. Shelley remained true to the creed of revolution.

(2) His strong sense of humanity and misery and oppression to which humanity was subjected, drove him to the revolutionary creed. Liberation of humanity was all that he dreamed of, and strove for in his own way ; and to it he dedicated his poetry.

(3) In an age when reaction was rampant everywhere in Europe, Shelley with his revolutionary zeal and propaganda, must have felt singularly lonely, and this loneliness is reflected in his poetry.

(4) However oppressed by his sense of loneliness, and now and then by despair, his faith in the liberation of humanity was never shaken for a moment.

(5) Shelley was an idealist, and as such he could suggest no practical steps for the liberation of humanity. He believed in constant striving, and all that it could achieve. His own misery and disappointment were as great as they could be in his circumstances of life, however sustained it could be by high idealism.

(6) The age, lighted up by gleams of hope now and then, reacted upon his sensitive spirit, and he reacted to it too in his individual way. His poetry can thus be rightly interpreted in terms of his age in which revolution was followed by the worst kind of reaction (the Holy Alliance which re-established the old regimes throughout Europe).

Q. 2. Examine the noted characteristics of Shelley's poetry.

Ans. See *Shelley's Poetry and its Characteristics.*

Q. 3. Write a note on Shelley as a lyric poet.

Ans. See *Shelley's Lyricism.*

Q. 4. Discuss Shelley's Pantheism and illustrate it from his ***Adonais.***

Ans. See *Shelley's Pantheism.*

Q. 5. Is there any trend of mysticism in Shelleys? If so, illustrate it from his ***Adonais?***

Ans. See *Shelley's Mysticism.*

Q. 6. Shelley is a beautiful and ineffectual angel— Discuss. (*Agra University, 1954, 1957*)

Ans. See *Shelley as a beautiful and ineffectual angel.*

Q. 7. What is your opinion of Shelley as a revolutionary?

Ans. See *Shelley as a Revolutionary.*

Q. 8. Write a short note on the lyrics of Shelley. (*Agra University, 1955*)

See Q. 3.

Q. 9. Is there any metaphysical vein in ***Adonais?*** **Fully bring it out.**

Ans. See *Has Shelley any Philosophy or Metaphysical views?*

Q. 10. Write a short essay on 'Shelley and Plato as kindred souls.' (*Agra University, 1955*)

Ans. We may trace the diffused influence of Plato in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound, Epipsychidion,* and *Adonais.* In his *Essay on Christianity* (1815) his views have been predominantly influenced by Plato. *Epipsychidion* owes much to the *Symposium* of Plato, and in its presentation of human love as a foretaste of an ideal and perfect union, re-echoes the spirit of Dante's *Vita Nuova, Adonais,* while it is a lovely tissue of reminiscences of Greek pastoral poetry, is inspired by Plato in its declaration of faith in the immortality of the spirit. Shelley's conceptions of

Love, Beauty, Goodness which are so eloquently propounded in *Adonais* are more or less derived from Plato. Love, as Plato conceives it, is an attraction towards the thing which is akin to our spirit. Familarity, akinness, is the basis of attraction and affection. This is the very idea that inspires the following :—

> He is a portion of the loveliness
> Which once he made more lovely. He doth bear
> His part, which the One Spirit's plastic stress
> Sweeps through the dull dense world......

The love of beauty is, therefore, nothing but the yearning of the soul to unite itself to what is akin to it. The leading idea of the *Symposium* is this : The soul seeks its union with the Divine, and has to pass through stages before it is attained. From beauty of form and body we rise to beauty of mind and spirit, and so to the Beauty of God himself. We may quote the following from the *Symposium* :

"He who under the influence of true love rising upward from these begins to see that beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going or being led by another to the things of love, is to use the beauties of earth as steps along which he mounts upwards for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. This is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute."

It is this idea of "beauty absolute", to which Shelley gives expression in the following verse :

> That light whose smile kindles the universe,
> That beauty in which all things work and moved,
> That benediction which the eclipsing curse
> Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love.
> Which, through the web of being blindly wove
> By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
> Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
> The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
> Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

From Plato too he derives the idea that the material life we live is not the essence or reality :

> He hath awakened from the dream of life.
> 'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep
> With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
> And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
> Invulnerable nothings.

According to Plato the world of perceived things is the unreal world, and there exists the true world of ideas, which we can grasp by reason. Things are only shadows of ideas. Ideas are eternal, things are transitory. So Shelley can write :

> He has outsoared the shadow of our might.

Shelley has a kindred spirit with Plato because he conceives so highly of love—love as the very principle and active agent of the universe and love as the regenerative force in mankind. Shelley says, "the great secret of morals is love ; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own." This seems to be an echo of the passage we have quoted above from the *Symposium*. Much of Shelley's poetry is inspired by this idea of Love as the most powerful force in religion, morality, and all human relationships. Shelley studied other philosophers too, for example, Hume and Berkeley, but he fell consciously or unconsciously more drawn to Plato that any other philosopher. Platonic ideas become a part of his being—he did not deliberately adopt them. As we have noted above, the expression of beauty is, for Shelley, very closely allied with love. And love he explains as "the principle of self-extension," and" its true organ is the imagination." These ideas have come, if not directly, from Plato.

Q. 11. Discuss the merits of *Adonais* as a pastoral elegy. (*Agra University, 1957*)

Ans. See *Form and Structure of the Poem.*

Q. 12. Write a short note on Shelley's use of the simile. (*Agra University, 1958*)

Ans. See *Shelley's Poetry and its Characteristics.*

Q. 13. Show that *Adonais* is inspired by no very vivid sense of personal loss, but takes over a traditional pattern and uses it to express the writer's own preoccupations and his own philosophy ?

(*Agra University, 1956*)

Ans. See *Any genuine Accent of Grief in a Pastoral Elegy* and also *Shelley's Self-Portraiture in the Poem.*

Q. 14. "It (*Adonais*) is a highly-wrought piece of art, and perhaps better, in point of composition, than anything I have written"—Shelley. Discuss.

Ans. See *Adonais*—"A Highly-wrought Piece of Art."

Q. 15. Show that although the slight narrative element in *Adonais* suffers from incoherence, this is simple amended by the unity of the inspired mood and the felicity of music and phrase.

(*Agra University, 1958*)

Ans. *Adonais* is a pastoral elegy and as it follows a well-established convention, it will have a certain air of artificiality. The pastoral elegy may not have much of narrative element as such. We do not have it in Milton's *Lycidas*, which is a typical pastoral elegy, and which Shelley must have before his mind. Shelley in the beginning follows Bion's *Lament for Adonis* (the title *Adonais* too openly suggests the connection), and also draws upon Moschus's *Lament for Bion.* We may suppose that this is all in obedience to the pastoral convention. He introduces Urania as the mother of Adonais. It is rather a bold step taken by Shelley. In Bion Aphrodite (*i. e.* Urania) mourns her lover, Adonis. But the Urania whom Shelley introduces into his poem is the spiritual or heavenly Aphrodite, as distinguished from Aphrodite Pandemos, who laments the death of Adonis in Bion. Whether we regard it as an invention or deviation, it is a noteworthy one— it means that Shelley is striking out an independent path for himself.

Among the mourners Shelley brings in the Dreams, whom the spirit of Adonais has fed ; and who are represented as "his flocks", and that is according to the pastoral tradition. Other mourners are Desires and Adorations, Winged Persuasions, and Veiled Destinies, Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnantions of Hopes and Fears, and twilight Phantasies, and Sorrow, with her family of Sighs, and Pleasure, blind with tears, etc. This set of mourners does not certainly follow the pastoral tradition. Urania is summoned to mourn Adonais, and she speeds out of her secret paradise, and comes all the way—"through camps and cities rough with stone and steel, and human hearts," which, "wounded the invisible palms of her tender feet where'er they fell."

In the lament of Urania for Adonais there is a reference to the savage attacks of the critics upon Adonais. Adonais too soon provoked "the unpostured dragon in his den". Of course Shelley makes a mistake in thinking that the death of Adonais was caused by the attack of the critics. These critics are described as "herded wolves," "obscene ravens," and vultures. They have been sufficiently cast gated by Byron :

> The Pythian of the age one arrow sped,
> And smiled !—The spoilers tempt no second blow,
> They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them
> lying low ;

while Urania is there, the Mountain Shepherds come to mourn the death of adonais. And they are contemporary poets—Byron, Thomas Moore, Shelley himself, and lastly Leigh Hunt. Here the incoherence of the story is most apparent—Urania being associated with the mountain Shepherds who are but contemporary poets. And there is a pathetic self-portraiture of Shelley—and this seems to capture the reader's attention more than the lament for Adonais (Keats). In fact Keats is forgotten for the time being.

Shelley's self-portraiture, however elaborate it may be, is not out of piece in the poem. He discovers points of affinity between himself and Keats. Like Keats, he has

been unfairly treated by critics, and his fate may not be unlike that of Keats too. He seems to foresee it when he writes :

> Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my heart ?
> Thy hopes are gone before : from all things here
> They have departed ; thou shouldst now depart !

The theme of the poem seams to be based upon identity of fate—and Shelley seems to mourn his own fate as much as Keats's. And when Shelley speaks of himself and of Keats with whose fate he identifies his own, his poetry is at its best. He breaks into the most rapturous strain when he speaks of the immortality won by Keats (*"He is a portion of the loveliness ......,*), when he speaks of "the inheritors of unfulfilled renown". He is as passionate and eloquent when he describes Rome—"at once the paradise, the grave, the city, and the wilderness."

Q. 16. Write a short note on—Shelley as the poet of Liberty. (*Agra University, 1953*)

Ans. See *Developments of Shelley's Poetic Power.*

Q. 17. Show by reference to his poems that the longish, elaborated poem, lyrical in spirit, though not in form, is far more characteristic of Shelley than the lyric.

(*Agra University, 1956*)

Ans. See *Adonais—"A Highly-wrought Piece of Art* and *Shelley's Lyricism.*

The following points may be noted :—

(a) Shelley is essentially a lyric poet, and whatever poem he writes, short or long, the lyrical vein is predominant in it. In his *Prometheus Unbound*, which is a pretty long poem, there are close-knit lyrical Passages. Like his skylark he "pours his full heart in profuse strains of unpremeditated art." In a lyric poet we find his self-expression. This is truer of Shelley than of any other English lyric poet. We may, take his *To a Skylark*. In this poem he describes the skylark,—and we may compare Wordsworth's sonnet—*To the Skylark*—and we see the difference of once. Wordsworh's poem is quite *objective*, but—

Shelley's poem is *subjective*—as a matter of fact we know more about Shelley's longings and desires, his passionate hopes and yearnings from this poem than from any other. *To a Skylark* is an ode, elaborately constructed as it should be, but is fused together by his lyric passion and lyric elan.

(b) Shelley has written many typical lyrics in which a single theme has been developed in musical phrases such as *stanzas written in dejection near Naples, Invocation, To the Night, the Flight of Love. To a Lady, with a Guitar,* etc. Not all of them are purely subjective or personal in tone and spirit. But they are marked by unity of subject and melodious phrasing. As a lyric poet, he is rarely surpassed, except by Burns who has sometimes exquisite moments of passion and mood.

(c) Shelley as a lyric poet has a fairly wide scope. We may take his longer poems :—*Alastor*, a pretty early poem, *The Revolt of Islam, Julian and Maddalo, Epipychidion,* they are all written in a predominantely lyrical vein—and they have also the lyric unity of theme and lyric melody of verse. Much of his verse is not lyrical in form, but it is stamped by his lyric genius. "Profuse strain of unpremeditated art" are the expression of his lyric genius.

(d) *Adonais* is a pastoral elegy, but as we go through it, we forget that is a pastoral elegy.

We are simply carried away by Shelley's lyric raptures. Oliver Elton rightly says, "the framework, charged though it be with memories of Bion and Milton, is from the first etherealised, and at last is quite burnt away in superterrestrial fire". The fact is that the whole theme, despite Urania and the Mountain Shepherds, is caught up into a lyric strain. His lyric passion gives life to the Dreams that hover round Adonais, the Splendours and Glooms, Morning with the tears in her hair, spring wild with grief. Echo singing in the hills, Urania on her flight to the bier of Adonais. We believe in the reality of this phantasmal world, Shelley shows here his unique bower as a lyric poet.

Q. 18. Give a running analysis of *Adonais*, and say which of the contemporary poets are introduced and how they are described, and what references are made to the critics of Keats.

Ans. *See Analysis and Exposition of the poem.*

Q. 19. Examine Shelley's Self-portraiture of Shelley in the poem and give your own impression of the poet.

Ans. See *Shelley's Self-portraiture in the poem.*

Q. 20. Shelley is at his best in *Adonais*, when he breaks away from his models.

Ans. See *Form and Structure of the Poem* and also *Critical Estimate.*

ODE TO THE WEST WIND

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes : O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed
The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow
Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill :
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere ;
Destroyer and preserver ; hear, oh, hear !

II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
Angels of rain and lightning : there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge
Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might
Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst : oh, hear !

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,
Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,
All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers
Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know
Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy powers, and share
The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be
The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need,
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth !
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words, among mankind !
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy ! O, Wind,
If Winter comes; can Spring be far behind ?

NOTES

4. **hectic red**—of a redness produced by decay.

4-5. By the association of colours mentioned here with the word 'pestilence', the reader is reminded of ghastly changes of the human complexion in illness.

6. **Chariotest**—serves as a chariot to.

7. **Winged seeds**—Flying seeds.

8. **Each like a corpse**—On the Day of Judgment, it is believed, the corpses (dead bodies) lying in their graves, will hear a trumpet blown by an angel and rise to receive their reward or punishment.

6-9. The seeds, apparently dead, are buried in autumn beneath the earth, until the spring.

9. **Thine azure sister of the Spring**—The East Wind which blows in Spring and brings with it clear, blue skies.

10. **Clarion**—a clear-sounding horn. Often used for rousing soldiers in sudden emergencies ; hence, here, a sound to awaken the earth from its winter sleep.

11. The spring zephyr is compared to a shepherd, whose sheep are driven out to pasture when winter is over. The 'sheep' in this case are the white-fleeced buds and flowers, of which the pasture is aloft in the air, on the branches of trees.

14. **Destroyer and preserver**—Explained by the preceding lines. Destroyer, as driving the last signs of life from the trees; preserver, as scattering the seeds which will come to life in spring.

15-17. A comparison of the wind's swift current to a stream of water. The leaves are compared to foliage which is imagined to hang on invisible trees in Heaven and Ocean, and to be swept off by the wind like dead leaves from real trees shaken into a river.

17. **the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean**—In a storm the sea and the sky intermingle; and if both are spoken of as trees, their branches become intermingled. From these drop clouds, which are spoken of as their leaves.

18. **Angels**—messengers.

19. **surge**—movement.

21. **Maenad**—A female devotee of Bacchus, the Greek god of wine.

22. **Zenith**—the point in the sky immediately overhead.

23. **The locks of the approaching storm**—The uplifted hair of the storm which is approaching. Connect it with the verb "are spread."

23-27. **Thou dirge.........of vapours**—The year that is ending is the dying body; the west wind is its death song; the say on which the night is closing is the dome of the huge tomb in which the dead body of the year is to be buried; and the vapours rising from the sea are the arches of the dome.

26-27. **The congregated might of vapours**—all the moisture absorbed by the wind into great storm-clouds.

27. **solid atmosphere**—The air which is made solid by the dense clouds and vapours.

28. **Black rain**—rain falling in the darkness of the night.

31. **Lulled by......streams**—Just as a child is lulled to sleep by the soft cares of its nurse's hand, in the same manner the sea is being lulled to sleep by the soft, circular motion of the transparent waters of the streams falling into it near the bay of Baiae which is almost semi-circular.

32. **Pumice isle**—island formed of lava from a volcano.

33. **Saw**—The subject of this verb is the Mediterranean, which is personified, and regarded both as the sea, and as the sea-god, looking in a dream into his own waters.

33. **Old palaces and towers**—Either those reflected in its waters, or those lying buried in its bottom and built when the sea was land, and now submerged in water. The first meaning is more rational, but 'overgrown with azure moss and flowers' can apply only to buildings in the sea itself.

34. **Intenser day**—The sunlight reflected on the waves of the sea is more intense than the dazzling light of the day above its surface.

36. **So sweet the sense faints picturing them**—the sweetness is so intense that the senses are overpowered in the attempt to realise it.

37-38. The waters of the Atlantic, smooth in the calm weather, are cloven into deep hollows, with the waves rising between them, by the strength of the wind.

38-42. **While far below..................themselves**—To explain the significance of these lines Shelley himself gives the following note: "The phenomenon alluded at to the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathises with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it".

39. **Sea-blooms**—the sea flowers.

40. **Sapless foliage**—juiceless, leaves, because however moist outside, on breaking off any part no sap comes forth from the leathery substance of sea plants.

42. **Despail**—are deprived of their leaves like the trees on land. In this connection Shelley says : "These sea plants shake, and the pieces break off from them, at the sound which heralds the change of season".

49-50. If even he could run with the wind, as he did when a boy, to race the wind seemed almost possible to him then.

50. **To outstrip thy skiey speed**—to beat you in your speed through the sky.

51. **Vision**—an impossibility.

54. **I fall upon the thorns of life**—I am suffering from various types of troubles and difficulties of life.

55. **A heavy weight of hours**—length of time combined with oppression and trouble.

56. **One too like thee**—that is, Shelley himself.

57. **Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is**—The wind rushing through the forest, plays on the branches and leaves, producing sound, as it does passing over the strings of a lyre. The lyre is a stringed musical instrument.

59. **The tumult of thy mighty harmonies**—The deep sound produced by the loud music of the West Wind.

61. **Autumnal**—belonging to the autumn season; therefore sad.

62. **Impetuous**—fierce; strong.

64. **Quicken**—bring to life.

65. **incantation**—charm.

66. **unextinguished hearth**—fireplace, in which the fire is always burning.

69. **The trumpet of a prophecy**—The loud proclamation of a prediction.

70. **If winter.........behind**—The worst days will be followed by good and happy days.

57-70. The whole of this stanza is a fine comparison of Shelley himself to the forest in autumn, when the trees are about to become apparently dead during the winter. He compares his thoughts to the dead leaves which, by burying and fertilizing the seeds, help the outburst of new life in spring. So he hopes that his words will help all the new bright impulses, which he believes are hidden in humanity, to blossom forth into beautiful actions. For this he appeals to the autumn wind to be to himself and his thoughts what it is to the forest and its leaves.

1. Critical Summary of the Poem :

In the first stanza Shelley describes the movement of the West Wind on the earth. He calls it—the Destroyer and Preserver, because, on the one hand, it destroys the leaves which are old and dry, and, on the other, preserves in the ground the seeds of the trees for future growth. He calls the wild West Wind as "breath of Autumn's being," because it blows very hard during the autumn season. When it blows, the dead leaves of the trees, which have become yellow, black and afflicted with diseases, are swiftly driven by it to far-off places. They fly before it like ghosts which run away on the appearance of the magnician—so terribly afraid they are of the West Wind. While its influence on the old leaves is destructive, it is kind to the seeds of the trees. These seeds are flown by the West Wind to safer places, where they are buried underground. Each of these seeds lies in its cold grave for some months, when it is brought back to life by the beautiful sister of the West Wind—the East Wind which blows in the spring season. When the Spring appears and the wind blows its bugle over the earth which has been sleeping during the winter season, a new life appears in the shape of buds, which spread themselves over the whole earth, and fill the whole landscape with fine colours and smells. The

West Wind is the Wild Spirit, which moves all over the earth. It destroys all that is useless, for example, the old, rotten leaves of the trees; but it preserves the seeds and buries them underground, so that they may remain safe dur ng the winter season, and then bloom forth, when the Spring comes, and the whole earth become alive with new life. It is to such a West Wind, that Shelley appeals to listen to him.

In the second stanza, Shelley describes the movement of the West Wind in the sky. When it blows impetuously and swiftly in the sky, it produces great agitation, and in the middle of the sky, the loosely hanging clouds are so tossed from one side to another, that they look like the rotten leaves which are shed from the trees under the influence of the West Wind. These clouds seem to be shaken from the interwined branches of the sky and the sea. It is these clouds which become the harbingers of rain and lightning. When they are spread over the blue sky, and are tossed from one side to another, they look like the shining hair which are raised from the head of a wild fairy. When they overcast the whole of the sky from the horizon to the highest point, they look like the hair of the storm which is approaching with all its ferocity and terror. The terrible noise which the West Wind produces while it blows through the sky, gives us the impression that it is the dirge or the wailing sound produced on the approaching death of the year (the year ends with the autumn season). The whole sky covered over with clouds, which are filled with vapours, looks during the night like a vast tomb in which the year is to be buried. It is from this solid atmosphere that there will come rain and lightning and hail. It is to such a swiftly moving West Wind, producing great agitation in the sky, driving away the clouds, and making them cover the whole sky, so that rain, lightning, and hail may come and darken the whole atomsphere, giving the impression of a tomb, that Shelley makes an appeal to listen to his request.

In the third stanza, Shelley describes the movement of the West Wind on the sea. When it blows over the

blue, calm waters of the Mediterranean, which seems to be sleeping, lulled by the gentle fall of the shining rivers in it near some rocky island in the Bay of Baiae, it enjoys the sight of old palaces and towers, which are lying peacefully under its waters, but which begin to tremble as it blows swiftly over them. These old palaces and towers, which are overgrown with moss and sea flowers, while getting agitated on account of the ferocity of the West Wind presents such an enchanting sight, that when one imagines it, one feels intoxicated by its sweetness. When the West Wind blows over the Atlantic Ocean, its level waters are pierced through and they divide themselves in chasms. On the other hand, the vegetation under the water of sea which has no sap in it, feels terribly up-set when it hears the fearful voice of the West Wind blowing over the surface of the ocean. These plants which grow under the surface of the sea, feel so much agitated by the swift current of the West Wind, that they tremble and are broken into pieces. It is to such a West Wind, blowing swiftly over the Mediterranean sea and the Atlantic Ocean, that Shelley makes an appeal to listen to him.

In the fourth stanza Shelley turns to his own self. He yearns to share the force and impetuosity of the West Wind, and he makes an earnest appeal to it to infuse in him all these qualities. A time was when he was as wild, swift and proud as the West Wind, but now unfortunately he has fallen on evil days, and all that vigour which characterised him once, is gone. The burden of life is too heavy for him to bear, and he has almost been crushed by it. Therefore he appeals to the West Wind to give consolation to his bleeding heart, and lift him up to a higher level. Of course, he would never have made this appeal, if he were a dead leaf which is borne by the West Wind; or a swift cloud which flies with it in sky; or a sea wave which trembles under its might. Then he would be sharing the emotion of its strength, though he himself would still remain a little less free and uncontrollable than the West Wind. Moreover, he would not have felt the necessity of making this appeal, if he still had the same strength and vitality, which he enjoyed during his boy-hood, when he could accompany

in his thought the West Wind in its wanderings through the sky; and when even to beat the West Wind in its speed was not considered by him as an impossibility. If he had been any of these—a leaf, a cloud, a wave; or if he still had the strength of his boyhood, he would never have made such an appeal to the West Wind. But unfortunately, he has lost all that old vigour, and the heavy weight of life has so much bowed him down, that he earnestly requests the West Wind to lift him endow him with its vitality and vigour, just as it lifts a dead leaf, a cloud or a wave.

In the fifth stanza Shelley appeals to the West Wind to use him as a lyre, musical instrument. Just as the West Wind, while blowing swiftly through the forest, produces a deep sound, in the same manner Shelley wants it to produce music through him. Though the old vigour is lost, and on account of having fallen on evil days he is like a forest whose leaves have been shed, yet the powerful harmonies of the West Wind, when coming in contact with him will receive a new note of sadness which will make them sweeter still. He appeals to the fierce Spirit of the West Wind to identify itself with his spirit and thus impart to him vigour and vitality. Just as the West Wind scatters the dead leaves, in the same manner it should spread the thoughts of Shelley, which are at present lying hidden and suppressed, all over the universe, so that they may give rise to new ideas and give birth to a new life. The West Wind can also propagate his poetry all over the world, so that the revolutionary ideas which his poems embody, may work like ashes and sparks coming out of hearth whose firé is never extinguished. In this manner the West Wind can serve as a trumpet announcing Shelley's prophecy regarding the regeneration of the world. It can also bring joy and happiness to the suffering humanity by holding out the hope that a better age is going to dawn, when all their miseries will come to an end. It can convince them that just as the darkest hour precedes the dawn, in the same manner Winter will certainly be soon followed by Spring, when the whole earth will blossom forth, and all the coldness and dryness disappear.

2. Critical Appreciation of *Ode to the West Wind.*

Ode to the West Wind is the most popular poem of Shelley, and it may be considered among half a dozen most popular poems in the English language. Here we find Shelley at his best as a lyricist. The whole poem has an uninterrupted sweep which corresponds to the swift blowing of the West Wind. The words and phrases seem to be issuing out from the poet's mind spontaneously like the lava issuing out from a volcano. When we read, we fall under its spell, which continues its effect long after we finish the poem, and our whole personality seems to be renovated and regenerated. Behind the poem there is the profound sincerity of Shelley, who was wedded to the great ideas of liberty, and who was devoutly interested in the reform of mankind so that all the shackles, which bind humanity, may be broken. So here in this poem we find Shelley the lyricist, the reformer, the idealist, the prophet of the golden age, uttering forth his ideas in a most forceful and musical manner.

One very important characteristic of *Ode to the West Wind* is that it is an artistic whole. One stanza follows another in a most natural manner, and there is a regular development from one stanza to another until the last line gives a beautiful summing up of the whole poem :

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ?

In the first stanza the poet describes the movement of the West Wind on the earth. The similes which he uses are the most apt. The West Wind driving away the dead leaves is compared to an enchanter, a magician, at whose presence the ghosts fly away in fright. The description of the dry leaves is the most suitable that can be imagined—

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,

Pestilence-stricken multitude.

It shows Shelley's minute and very careful observation of natural phenomena. The simile of the winged seeds, lying cold and low, like "a corpse within its grave" is a very

original one, and it also shows Shelley's accurate knowledge of the inner working of nature's process of growth. The same is the case with the simile comparing the sweet buds with "flocks to feed the air". Shelley calls the East Wind the "azure sister" of the West Wind, which "blows her clarion o'er the dreaming earth". So whereas, on one side, Shelley demonstrates an accurate knowledge of natural phenomenon; on the other, he puts the reader under a spell by his original and most apt phraseology. The movement of the lines is also so swift that it conveys the sense of impetuosity of the wind and its ferocity. When we read this stanza, we seem to be feeling the influence of the wild West Wind blowing hard over the earth. So much so, that we feel like being swept away from our feet under the swift draught of the West Wind.

The second stanza, which describes the movement of the West Wind through the sky, demonstrates the range of Shelley's imagination and his interest in the sweeping aspects of nature. Unlike Wordsworth who was interested in the minute things of nature, and especially in its calmer aspects, Shelley's imagination embraces the whole of the earth and the sky, and in the third stanza, it includes even the Mediterranean sea and the Atlantic Ocean. Again in the second stanza we find Shelley as the perfect artist. Especially his capacity to coin original similes is notable. He compares the loose clouds in the sky to the decaying leaves of the earth. The Heaven and the Ocean are compared to tangled branches from which these leaves, in the form of clouds, are shed. He calls the clouds as "Angels of rain and lightning", and compares them again to "the bright hair uplifted from the head of some fierce Maenad", and "the locks of the approaching storm". The West Wind is termed by Shelley the "dirge of the dying year", and the whole sky overcast with dark clouds is compared to a "vast sepulchre", from which the rain and storm will burst. All these similies not only show what a wonderfully accurate knowledge Shelley possessed regarding the working of the natural phenomena, but also the fertility of his imagination as well as his mastery over the language. The similes and the phrases, which are so apt and effective

seem to be issuing spontaneously from the fertile brain of Shelley, and flow as swiftly as the West Wind blowing over the sky.

In the third stanza the imagination of Shelley seems to be running riot. He imagines the West Wind blowing swiftly over the calm waters of the Mediterranean, and seeing the ruins of the old palaces submerged beneath the sea. The picture of these submerged ruins, overgrown with moss and flowers, and quivering under the swift current of the West Wind is so fascinating, that when the poet imagines it, he himself feels dazed under its spell. Then the poet follows the passage of the West Wind in his imagination over the vast Atlantic Ocean, whose waters are pierced into chasms by its swift current. He also feels the trembling agitation of the vegetation which grows under the water, and which is frightened and disturbed by the forceful blowing of the West Wind. The poet seems to be following in his imaginations the movement of the West Wind on the earth, the sky and the sea, and he invests this vigorous destroying and preserving agent of Nature with a personality which is very much akin to the forceful personality of Shelley himself. The imagination of the reader, as he reads through the first three stanzas is so greatly stirred, that he shares the experience of the poet, and falls under the spell of his magic.

In the last two stanzas Shelley becomes subjective, and autobiographical. He is woefully reminded of his own sufferings and hardships. He, who during his boyhood, was as uncontrollable and impetuous as the West Wind, has been crushed under the terrible burden of the customs and conventions of life. He has lost his old vigour and vitality. He, therefore, appeals the West Wind to infuse into him a new life and energy. Expressing extreme self-pity, which is an important characteristic of all romantic poetry, and especially of Shelley, the poet bursts out into a piteous cry like a child who has been orphaned, and who has lost its happiness at the hands of unsympathetic relatives :

I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed

Shelley is prepared to get himself transferred to a dead leaf, a cloud or a wave, so that it may be lifted by the West Wind, and thus share its vitality. So here in the fourth stanza, Shelley's imagaination, which was roaming over the whole earth, the sky and the ocean, closely following the movement of the West Wind over these regions, suddenly closes its wings, as it is overburned by the personal griefs and sorrows of the poet. Only the intervention of the West Wind, the destroying and preserving agent of Nature, can come to his rescue. It can only start the regenerating process, putting an end to his present miseries, and restoring to him his own original strength and vitality.

In the fourth stanza Shelley takes up the role of a prophet and reformer, which he liked so much. He appeals to the West Wind to make him into a musical instrument and blow through him, as it blows through the forest, and produces a deep, impressive music. He knows, that the old revolutionary fire of his young days is no longer in him but his brain is like an unextinguished hearth, from which ashes and sparks can still come out in the form of revolutionary ideas, which will quicken a new birth in the world which needs a shaking up. So Shelley believes that if the West Wind, the most forceful agent in nature, lend its power to him, he can shake the whole world by his prophetic words. If the West Wind impart its vitality and vigour to his decaying faculties, he can again through his poems spread the gospel of hope to humanity which at present is lying low in the pool of misery, depression and lethargy. The West Wind in this case can be, through the lips of the poet, "the trumpet of a prophecy". The poem ends with a highly optimistic note, which is an important characteristic of Shelley's poetry—

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ?

According to Shelley, there is always hope for mankind. Whatever sufferings and hardships humanity may have to undergo, ultimately, this dark period will end, and the Golden Age, the era of peace, prosperity and

plenty must dawn. Just as in nature, when in the autumn the rotten things are destroyed, the seeds for future growth are also sown ; in the same manner, even during the most depressing periods of human history. seeds of regeneration are also sown which will blossom forth at some future date. What is required is that humanity must be saved from the feelings of depression and hopelessness, which do great damage. It is the duty of poet to keep humanity always aware of its glorious future towards which it is evolving in a natural process. Shelley, who is keen to perform the role of such a prophet, calls upon the West Wind, the destroying and preserving agent in nature, to lend its power to him, so that he may do so more effectively, and save humanity from depression.

So we find that the *Ode to the West Wind* is infused with the very spirit of Shelley's personality. Here we find him as the lyricist, the lover of nature, the imaginative artist, the sincere well-wisher of mankind, the prophet and the reformer—in fact, in all his aspects as a poet—at his best.

TO A SKYLARK

Hail to thee, blithe spirit !
    Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
    Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.
Higher still and higher
    From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire ;
    The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.
In the golden lightning
    Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
    Thou dost float and run ;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.
The pale purple even
    Melts around thy flight ;
Like a star of Heaven,
    In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,
Keen as are the arrows
    Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
    In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see—we feel that it is there.
All the earth and air
    With thy voice is loud,
As, when the night is bare,
    From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflowed.
What thou art we know not ;
    What is most like thee ?
From the rainbow clouds there flow not
    Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden
    In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
    Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not :
Like a high-born maiden
    In a palace-tower ,
Soothing her love-laden
  Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower ;
Like a glow-warm golden
    In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
    Its aereal hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view,
Like a rose embowered
    In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
    Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves :
Sound of vernal showers
    On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
    All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass :
Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
    What sweet thoughts are thine ;
I have never heard
    Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.
Chorus Hymeneal,
    Or triumphal chant,
Matched with thine would be all
    But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.
What objects are the fountains
    Of thy happy strain ?
What fields, or waves, or mountains ?
    What shapes of sky or plain ?
What love of thine own kind ? what ignorance of pain ?

with thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be :
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee :
Thou lovest—but ne'er knew loves sad satiety.

Waking or asleep
Thou of death must deam,
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream ?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not :
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught ;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear ;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground !

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then—as I am listening now.

NOTES

1. **Hail**—welcome ; **blithe**—happy.

4. **Pourest thy full heart**—pours out the feelings which fill your heart.

5. **In profuse strains**—in continuous and full music. **Unpremeditated**—spontaneous ; without any previous plan.

6-8. **Higher still and higher from earth thou springest like a cloud of fire**—A critic of Shelley has proposed to alter these lines by placing a semicolon after "springest" as well as after "fire", thus leaving the simile "like a cloud of fire" alone and independent in the verse, because he says, "nobody ever saw a cloud spring from the earth." But this has been answered by pointing out that in the first verse the lark is addressed as already far up in the sky, and that a cloud in the sky frequently "springs" up "higher"; and also that the image "like a cloud of fire" does not apply to its actual appearances but to its continuous motions in upward circles, like the whirl upward of flames burning in the open air, when large masses of flame seem to break away from the fire, and ascend in a cloud which disappears as it arises.

8. **The blue deep thou wingest**—you fly through the blue sky.

9-10. You are continually rising higher and singing.

11. **In the golden lightning**—Shelley speaks of the sun-rays as 'lightning', because just before sunrise the sun 'sunken' (i.e. invisible) below the horizon, 'shoots' arrows of light into the sky somewhat like flashes of lightning.

12. **O'er which clouds are brightening**—Clouds are often gathered over the part of the horizon where the sun will rise in the morning, and they brighten with his strengthening rays, just as at sunset we see the most beautiful effects from clouds brightened by the light shining obliquely on and through them.

15. **Like an unbodied joy whose race is just run**—"Unbodied joy" means the spirit of happiness having no body. Here the term "unbodied" brings out that spiritual character which is the very key-note of Shelley's poem. He has already addressed the bird as "spirit", and "unbodied" is in keeping with that term. "An Unbodied joy" is a "delighted spirit", a soul happy in freedom from earthly burdens, whose heavenly existence ('race') has just begun.

16-17. **The pale purple............flight**—Shelley here transfers "even" (evening) to the unusual sense of the twilight, which is characteristic of evening and morning alike. This darkness is considered by the poet as "even" and its "purple" melts into daylight as the lark sings at sunrise.

18-20. The stars present in the daylight sky are of course unseen. Note that nearly every simile in the poem suggests (i) the sweetness and appeal of the birds' song; (ii) invisibility of the bird ; (iii) the height from where it is singing.

20. **shrill delight :** loud, delightful music.

20-25. The moon whose "intense" light fades in the early morning sky, till we hardly see it, but "feel that it is there". It was an ancient conception that heat was composed of the sun's "arrows"; and the rays of the moon were her arrows. "Silver" is a very common epithet of the moon, as "golden" is of the sun. The stanza means that we feel the lark to be there by the intense sound of his song, even though we lose sight of him in height to which he roars.

28-30. **When night is bare**—*i.e.* when the night sky is bare of clouds, except one alone, and that having passed from before the moon, her rays "rain" over the sky.

33-34. **From rainbow clouds**—Rain-drops from rainbowed clouds are particularly lustrous, because of the sunshine behind them, which produces the rainbow.

35. **showers a rain of melody**—pours continually strains of music.

36-40. A beautiful verse, containing one of the most perfectly conceived and expressed similes to be found in English. "A poet hidden in the light of thought" is a poet who soars into the region of lofty thought, thought so intense that, as he sings from the height, those who look from a lower plane, and listen to him, are dazzled, unable to clearly see and follow him as it were, though they can hear and enjoy, for its melody merely, the verse

which he pours forth from that exalted environment. (Shelley himself is one of these poets, and in his transcendental moods the ordinary reader finds it difficult to follow him, though the melody he sings is always sweet).

The lark disappears, not only on account of the height to which it soars, but because of the dazzling brightness of the uppermost sky in the early morning, hither the rays of the rising sun reach before they touch the earth.

38. **hymns**—song ; in the original sense 'songs of praise' ; **unbidden**—spontaneously, out of the fulness of his nature and feeling.

39. **wrought**—worked up to ; influenced. Shelley here states his idea of the poet's function. Like Matthew Arnold with his doctrine of poetry as a "criticism of life". Shelley considers the poet as a teacher of hopes and fears.

43-44. **love-laden soul**—soul burdened with love.

45. **bower**—a lady's private room.

46. **glow-worm**--The glow-worm is a small luminous beetle, which at night emits a pale bluish-yellow phosphorescent light.

47. **a dell of dew**—a small valley all covered with dew.

48. **unbeholden**—'Beholden' means 'under an obligation' ; this then means 'not obliged to', spontaneously, as in the line 38 'singing hymns unbidden'.

49. **aerial hue**—its pale, 'airy' bluish light.

51-55. Like a rose which the winds make full blown, so that its perfume is given forth freely.

51. **embowered**—hidden ; covered.

55. **these heavy-winged thieves**—'The wings of the wind is a familiar expression, and here the 'wings' are 'heavy'' just as a weary or sluggish man is said to walk with heavy

feet. 'Thieves' because they have stolen the perfume. The words, in conjunction with the preceding lines, suggest the warm languid winds of summer in a rich garden, breathing perfume and glowing with roses.

56-60. 'Thy music' surpasses all 'joyous, clear and fresh' things in joyousness, clearness and freshness.

56. **vernal showers**—spring showers. 'Vernal' is from Latin *Vernus*, objective of *ver*, the spring.

58. **Rain-awakened flowers**—Flowers that open under the soft spring rains have a specially fresh appearance. The objects mentioned in this verse give an aggregate exquisite impression, an impression of the freshness of spring, made the more striking by the picture of summer languor in the last verse.

65. **panted forth**—issued forth warmly and ardently. This phrase describes the passionate utterance usual to the lyrics of love and wine.

66. **Chorus Hymenael**—marriage chorus of joy. 'Hymen' or 'Hymenaeus' was the mythological god of marriage among the ancient Greeks.

67. **trimphal chant**—the song of triumph or victory was a special form of lyric composition.

68. **Matched**—compared.

69. **empty vaunt**—meaningless boast.

71. **the fountains**—that which causes its song to flow: the springs, sources.

76. **joyance**—enjoyment ; delight.

77. **Languor**—laziness ; pain.

78. **Shadow of annoyance**—The least sign of irritation or trouble.

80. **satiety**—state of being satisfied.

81-85. The lark cannot feel the sad uncertainty which Shelley considers the lot of humanity, as regards death and hereafter, for if it did, its song could not be so joyous and clear.

86-90. Shelley had that strong sense of the sadness underlying all human joy, which is often expressed by all the romantic poets.

86. **look before and after**—*i.e.*, at the past and to the future.

90. **Our sweetest........thought**—tragic songs are more sweet than the comic ones.

91-95. Even if we could be without hate, pride, fear and sorrow, Shelley cannot conceive our reaching such joy as the skylark's song shows.

96. **measures**—expression of thought measured in musical beats.

100. **thou scorner of the ground**—The skylark seems to be disliking the earth, and earthly life, because it always flies high up in the sky. On the other hand, the poet, whatever his gifts of melody and learning may be, feels himself tied to the prose of life.

103. **harmonious madness**—in a poetic rapture or frenzy, which takes shape in harmonius verse. Plato said that no one could be a great poet "without some mixture of madness'', and according to Goethe, poetic rapture is "drunkenness without wine.''

Critical Summary :

To a Skylark is one of the most popular lyrics in English poetry. Here Shelley describes the flight of the skylark who soars high in the sky always pouring forth a most delightful song. Shelley is impressed by the swiftness of the bird, its sweet music and its carefree nature, In contrast to it, he himself is bound hand and foot, as all humanity is, and therefore in all the time miserable and moaning. The spontaneous actions of the bird, its flight

and song, are given a very apt expression in this soul-enchanting lyric, which is one of the best that Shelley ever wrote. Here he has inmortalized himself as well as the bird.

At the outset Shelley welcomes the skylark, which on account of its extraordinary cheerfulness does not look like a bird, but some spirit of heaven, which is untouched by the sorrows of the world. Another reason which makes Shelley believe it to be a spirit is that it is seldom seen on earth, but is all the time flying very high in the sky, reaching almost its zenith, and it is from there that it pours forth its spontaneous music which is so touching that it seems to be coming from the depth of its heart, without any conscious effort on its part. The notes of music produced by the skylark are so profuse that the whole atmosphere begins to resound with them. The bird is invisible, and it can be spotted only by the music which it is issuing forth, and thereby charging the whole atmosphere as if with an electric current.

In the second stanza Shelley describes the swift flight of the bird from the earth to the sky. As soon as it springs from the earth, it rises higher and higher in the sky. Under the bright sunshine its wings become transparent and it looks like a cloud of fire. In this manner it flies upward through the blue atmosphere, and is continuously singing and rising higher and higher in the sky.

It is at the time of sunset that the flight of the skylark in the sky becomes extraordinarily enchanting. While the sun is setting in the west, and is shedding golden light in the west, brightening the clouds which are lingering there, the skylark seems to be floating and running in the sky so gleefully and merrily, that it seems to be a bodiless spirit of joy, which has just started its flight, and is therefore fresh and strong.

As the skylark flies through the purple atmosphere, it seems to be dissolving and making way for it. It is invisible like the heavenly stars which on account of the bright light of the sun cannot be seen during the day. But in

spite of its being invisible, its presence is felt by the poet somewhere high up in the sky on account of sweet music that is coming from it.

Just as at dawn the rays which are issuing forth from the moon become dim on account of the brighter light of the sun, but we feel that she (the moon) is still there in the sky, in the same manner, on account of the sweet notes of music poured forth by the skylark, we are convinced of its presence in the sky, though it is in itself invisible.

The whole of the atmosphere is resounding on account of the sweet song of a single skylark, just as at night when the sky is clear, the moon, though covered by a lonely cloud, still issues forth its rays and thus floods the whole sky with light. The skylark is also invisible like the moon hidden behind a lonely cloud, but the sweet notes of its song fill the whole atmosphere with music.

As the skylark is invisible, the poet asks what it looks like, and what it resembles. All that he knows about it is that from it there issues forth a sweet shower of music, which surpasses in its effect even the shining drops of rain falling from clouds aglow with the rainbow. The poet therefore begins to conjecture what can the skylark be compared to, and there comes to his mind a series of beautiful and most apt similes ever devised by a poet's brain.

In the first place he compares the skylark to a poet who is not properly understood by the public on account of the lofty thoughts which his poetry embodies. But the poet remains undeterred by lack of appreciation, and goes on composing more and more poems, until the people are awakened to the beauty of the thought contained therein. The public then begin to appreciate his original ideas, and sympathise with the hopes and fears which are given expression to in his poetry. It is like such a poet that the skylark goes on singing and filling the air with music, until those who were unaware of its presence, begin in to realise it and appreciate the charm of its song.

In the second place, Shelley compares the skylark to a young lady belonging to a high family, who sitting in the tower of her palace from where she is not visible to the people, consoles her love-sick heart by pouring forth sweet music, which overflows her hidding palace. Though herself invisible, her presence is felt by those who listen to her sweet music. In the same manner, the skylark is invisible, but its presence in the sky is realised on account of the sweet music which issues forth from it.

The skylark then is compared to a glow-worm which is hidden behind flowers and grass in a valley which is covered with dew. Though the glow-worm is invisible, yet on account of the colourful light which it is shedding forth all arround it, without being asked for it, its presence is known to the people. The skylark, like the glow-worm is invisible in the sky, but on account of the music it is constantly issuing forth, without being asked for it, its presence is known to the people.

Finally the skylark is compared to a rose which is concealed behind its own green leaves and thus is not visible to the bees. But the sweet fragrance which it is constantly emitting fills the atmosphere so profusely that the bees by smelling it become almost faint and thus realise the presence of the rose hidden behind the leaves. It is from this sweet fragrance that the presence of the rose is known; otherwise it is hidden from the view. In the same manner the presence of the skylark is realisad only from the music that it pours forth, which fills the whole atmosphere, and thus is known to the people the location of the bird somewhere in the sky.

What has impressed Shelley most is the soul enchanting music which the skylark produces. It has charmed him so much that he feels that listening to it has given him the sweetest and happiest experience in his life. There are, of course, many other phenomena of nature, which are very delightful, fresh and clear, *e.g.*, the sound produced by rain during the spring season as it gently falls on the shining grass, and the sight of the flower, which

blossoms forth under its influence. But, there is nothing in nature which is comparable to the music produced by the skylark. It is the most joyous, clear and fresh thing that Shelley has ever known or experienced in his life.

The basis of the unique quality of the skylark's music is the sweet thoughts entertained by the bird ; and the poet wants to know their nature, because he knows by experience that even the songs which are engendred by the thoughts of love and wine, and which are very sweet, are surpassed by the song of the skylark. So the poet requests the skylark to teach him those thoughts which are the basis of its sweet music.

Even the best types of songs sung on the auspicious occasion of marriage and victory are not so sweet as the song of the skylark. Compared to the rapturous song of the skylark, these songs about marriage and victory seem to be empty chatter, because in them we feel that something is missing, which is not the case with the song of the skylark.

So the poet asks the skylark what those objects are which are the source of its sweet song. What kinds of fields, waves or mountains they are which provide inspiration for such sweet songs ? What shape of the sky or the plain give it a special inspiration to sing ? Is it the love of its own species, or is it the complete unconsciousness of the misery that surrounds the world ? Being himself the poet of the first order, Shelley is inquisitive to know the source of the skylark's inspiration, so that he may also tap that source to write fine poetry.

Shelley feels that the type of acute happiness that the skylark seems to enjoy, cannot be touched by any kind of sadness, as it is the case with human beings. Their happiness is always mixed up with some type of misery, and it is never unalloyed. It seems to Shelley that the skylark does not experience irritation even in the least degree, and it is because, though experiencing the sentiment of love, it does not reach the point of saturation when love itself becomes a source of misery. Here Shelley is comparing

the skylark with men in general, who are never completely happy, who are often annoyed on account of the obstacles which come in their love, and who, though in love, soon reach a point of satiety, and the happiness of love is turned into misery.

Another cause of the misery of mankind is the fear of death which is all the time hovering over their head, and making their lives miserable. Shelley thinks that the complete and unalloyed happiness of the skylark, which gives birth to her rapturous song must be due to the deeper and truer knowledge that it possesses regarding the nature of death, which is denied to mankind. That is why the skylark enjoys complete happiness which mankind cannot experience.

Contrasted with the skylark, men are always discontented. They are never satisfied with the present, and so they are either looking back to the time which is gone for ever, or looking forward to the rosy future. Instead of being satisfied with what they possess, they are all the time wailing and weeping for what they lack. Even when they seem to be laughing most sincerely, there is some pain which is hidden behind that laughter. This is the common tragedy of mankind—dissatisfaction with present and looking backward to the past and forward to the future, and thus spending all their life in a disconsolate manner. That is why the sweetest songs of mankind are the tragic songs, which give expression to the saddest thoughts.

Analysing the basic factors which poison human life at its very source, and fill it with misery, Shelley comes to the conclusion that they are hate, pride, fear and sorrow. If men could somehow get rid of these, as the skylark seems to have done, they would be in a position to reach very much near the skylark in point of happiness. According to Shelley, the skylark enjoys unalloyed happiness because it is free from hatred, pride, fear and mental depression. If men can also throw away these evil tendencies from their temperament, they would attain real happiness.

The poet ,ni fact, can learn more from the skylark, which has no love for worldly objects, and therefore keeps itself away from the earth, than he can from the most delightful tunes produced by musicians, or from the lofty thoughts contained in great books. The skylark, on account of its real musical skill, is the ideal teacher for the poet who wants to learn to write rapturous lyrics.

In the end the poet assures the skylark that if it teaches him even half the happiness that it experiences, then he would be able to produce such rapturous songs that the whole world would listen to him with as rapt attention as he is listening at present to the song of the skylark. Shelley believes that the poet must be completely happy, untouched by any sorrow, that his life should be transparently clean and virtuous; only then he can produce real poetry. It is the pure and clean life that the skylark lives, which is responsible for its music which surpasses in its sweetness every other type of natural phenomenon.

2. Critical Appreciation of *To a Skylark*.

To a Skylark is another very popular poem of Shelley. It is one of the finest lyrics that he ever wrote. The poet is especially impressed by the rapturous music which is poured forth by the bird continuously and unconsciously. The fact that the bird is invisible raises the curiosity of the poet who begins to conjecture what it really is, and how it looks like. Being himself a lyrical poet of the first order, a past master in the art of giving spontaneous expression to his inner feelings, Shelley is greatly attracted by the rapturous song of the bird, which is so touching that it seems to be coming from its very heart. But whereas the sweet songs of poets are all expressions of the saddest thoughts, the sweet song of the skylark does not express even a shadow of sadness or languour. Shelley believes that it is purest product of complete happiness that the bird enjoys. There is no tinge of sorrow in its gladness as is the case with men, who never enjoy unalloyed happiness. In fact it is this aspect of the skylark which appeals to him the most. The skylark represents the contentment that the creatures of nature enjoy, because they are free from hatred, fear, pride, and sorrow. Man, on the other

hand, is a victim of all these passions, and therefore he is always sad. He hates his own fellowmen, is filled with the sense of self importance and is always afraid of what might happen next. Especially the horrible image of death is all the time hovering around him, and he is always discontented with the present and is looking forward or backward. This pitiable condition of men is expressed in the following memorable lines :—

We look before and after
And pine for what is not :
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught ;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Shelley who is a past master in the use of similes is at his best in this poem. Here simile after simile issues forth from his fertile brain like the spontaneous music coming from the skylark. He compares the skylark which is itself invisible, but whose presence is known by the sweet music which it pours forth from the sky, firstly to a poet who is unknown and unappreciated on account of the obscurity of his thought, but who not caring for the lack of response and appreciations from the public goes on composing his poems, until the whole world realises their importance and charm. Secondly, he compares the skylark to a high born maiden, who is hidden in a palace tower, but who goes on consoling her loveworn heart by singing beautiful songs until they attract the notice of the passers-by. Thirdly he compares the skylark to a golden glow-worm who is hidden behind flowers and grass in a valley, but the colourful light coming from it makes its presence known to the people. Fourthly, the skylark is compared to a rose which is concealed behind green leaves, but the fragrance which it emits, and which fills the whole atmosphere, makes the bees faint and indicate the presence of the rose.

All these similes which are extremely beautiful and most apt are a proof of the fact Shelley possessed the highest type of imaginative faculty. Being a very keen observer of the phenomena of nature, he could think of the most suitable comparisons rather spontaneously. Here we

find Shelley's art as effortless and unpremeditated as the song of the skylark. Just as the poet listens to that song with rapt attention, we also feel spell-bound by the lyrical impetuosity of Shelley. The whole poem flows like a current and we are simply charmed by the speed with which the poet presents one image after another, each equally apt and impressive.

Shelley in this lyric shows himself as possessing a deep insight into the basic problems of mankind. We are unhappy, because we are ignorant about the real nature of death, because we are narrow-minded, selfish and proud. Man can learn from the skylark the right approach to life, and the poet can copy its musical skill to his advantage. That is why Shelley request the skylark to be his teacher and then assures it that he would than be a better poet commanding greater influence and respect among the people :—

Teach me half the gladness
    That thy brain must know ;
Such harmonious madness
    From my lips would flow
The world should listen them—as I am listening now.

Another important aspect of this lyric is that Shelley, himself being an unearthly poetic genius, admires the ethereal quality in the skylark. It appeals to him, because most of the time it flies in the sky, and scorns the ground. Wordsworth who also wrote a poem about the skylark, looks upon the bird as the type of the wise rising to heaven, but never losing touch with the sad realities of life :—

Type of the wise, who soar, but never roam—
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home !

One the other hand, Shelley's skylark is the scorner of the ground, and it is ever soaring in the sky. It is the "blithe Spirit" and not an ordinary bird. That is why it appeals to Shelley who himself was a disembodied spirit, and who looked upon the body as a cage for the spirit. The skylark, therefore, represents for him the release and escape from the mundane realities of life, which he himself cherished so much.

FROM 'PROMETHEUS UNBOUND'

Demogorgon

Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,
Beautiful orb ! gathering as thou dust roll
The love which paves thy path along the skies :

The Earth

I hear : I am a drop of dew that dies.

Demogorgon

Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
With wonder, as it gazes upon thee ;
Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth
Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony :

The Moon

I hear : I am a leaf shaken by thee !

Demogorgon

Ye Kings of suns and stars, Daemons and Gods,
Aetherial Dominations, who possess
Elysian, windless , fortunate abodes
Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness :

A Voice from above

Our great Republic hears, we are blest, and bless.

Demogorgon

Ye happy dead, whom beams of brightest verse
Are clouds to hide, not colours to portray,
Whether your nature is that universe
Which once ye saw and suffered—

A Voice from beneath

Or as they
Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

Demogorgon

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone
Of sullen lead; from heaven's star fretted domes
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on:

A Confused Voice

We hear: thy words waken Oblivion.

Demogorgon

Spirits, whose homes are flesh; ye beasts and birds,
Ye worms, and fish; and ye living leaves and buds;
Lightning and wind; and ye untameable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes:

A Voice

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

Demogorgon

Man, who wert once a despot and a slave;
A dupe and deceiver; a decay;
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night of this immortal day:

All

Speak: thy strong words may never pass away.

Demogorgon

This is the day, which down the void abysm
As the earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's depotism,
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:
Love, from its awful throne of patient power

In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.
Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clash her with his length;

These are the spells by which to reassume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.
To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy power, which seems omnipotent;

To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;

This alone is Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

Brief Introduction :

Prometheus Unbound was written by Shelley in 1818-1819. "This poem", Shelley writes: "was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of the drama".

"It is a drama" wrote Shelley to Peacock, "with character and mechanism of a kind yet unattempted; and I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts". Writing to Charles Oliver, his publisher, he calls *Prometheus* "the most perfect of my productions". The action is, of

course, founded upon the myth of the earth-born Titan Prometheus, who, according to the Aeschylean version of the legend, had assisted Zeus in his war against the Titan, but had championed mortals against the oppression of Zeus. For his services to mortals he was condemned, after previous sufferings on a rock in Scythia and afterwards in Caucasus, to be chained to a cliff on mount Caucasus with an eagle perpetually devouring his liver. Prometheus defies the power of his enemy, and endures centuries of torture. The triumph of humanity over oppression is consummated by the re-union of Prometheus with his bride Asia, daughter of Oceanus, the personification of nature, who, as the hour of deliverance approaches resumes the beauty of her prime. In the last act, Shelley "Idealises the forms of creation—such as we know them. Maternal Earth the mighty parent, is superseded by the Spirit of the Earth, the guide of our planet through the realms of sky ; while his fair and weaker companion and attendent, the Spirit of the Moon, receives bliss from annihilation of evil in the superior sphere."

The difficulty of the poem is the intermeaning of metaphysical speculation with the action. Mrs. Shellley said, "It requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as his own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem. They elude the ordinary reader by their abstraction and delicacy of distinction, but they are far from vague." Shelley's intention of co-ordinating his "philosophical views of Mind and Nature in prose metaphysical essays on the nature of Man, which would have served to explain much what is abscure in his poetry" was never fulfilled.

This selection is taken from Act IV of Prometheus Unbound, where Demogorgon, the Supreme Spirit, is welcoming the dawn of the Golden Age with the final victory of Prometheus. Here he has idealised the various forms of nature—earth, moon etc.; and has sung of the emancipation of humanity from oppression and bondage.

NOTES

26. **oblivion**—forgetfulness.

29. **untameable**—uncontrollable.

34. **from the cradle to the grave**—from beginning to end.

37. **void abysm**—an empty depth.

47. **which bars.........strength**—which puts an end to the strength of destructive force.

52. **disentangled doom**—humanity's destiny which has become free.

55. **defy**—resist. **omnipotent**—all powerful.

57. **wreck**—ruin.

58. **falter**—stumble ; hesitate.

Critical Appreciation and Summary :

Shelley's greatest poetical drama is *Prometheus Unbound*, and this may be considered his highest achievement in poetry. Here he has dramatised the ancient legend of Prometheus who stole fire from heaven for the benefit of mankind, and who for this crime of his was chained on the rock by his enemy Jupiter, and there his liver was perpetually eaten by an eagle. Prometheus remained in chains and agony so long as he entertained the feelings of enmity against his opponent, and cursed him for his cruelty. But then there came the inward transformation in the heart of Prometheus, who shed off feelings of hatred and was filled with love and compassion for his oppressor. As soon as this happened, Prometheus became free, and he was united with Asia, the personification of nature.

The theme of *Prometheus Unbound* is the general theme of his other long poems like the *Revolt of Islam*, *Queen Mab* etc. He believes that humanity can be freed from oppression not by revenge, but through love. From the practical experience of the French Revolution which failed because the rebels used the weapons of revenge and cruelty against their oppressors, he came to the conculsion, that love for

the oppressor is the best weapon for the emancipation of mankind. In this respect Shelley believed in the theory of non-violence. Not by hatred, but by love the oppressor can be vanquished.

In this selection, which occurs at the end of the play, in the fourth act, Demogorgon, the Supreme Spirit, is singing of the transformation which has come about all over nature and in humanity after the final victory of Prometheus. He asks the earth how it is feeling after the great event. There has come about calm, happiness and harmony on the earth. It has become a 'beautiful orb'', and as it revolves on its course, it is weaving the web of love to bind together in sympathy and brotherhood all the heavenly spheres. The earth which feels completely happy, replies that it is enjoying itself a drop of dew lying happily on the green grass.

Then Demogorgon asks the moon (which gazes constantly on the earth, and is pleased to see harmony, peace beauty and love prevailing all over the earth) how she is feeling now. The moon replies that she feels as fine as a leaf which is shaken by the heavenly winds.

Demogorgon then asks all the other heavenly spheres—the suns, stars, the gods and demons (who live in their peaceful homes beyond the wilderness of heaven) how they are feeling at the moment. In reply the voice comes from above that a transformation has taken place over the earth, and even the dead are happy over this event. A voice which comes from beneath supports this contention.

Then Demogorgon asks all the other spirits which reside above and below the globe, how they are feeling the impact of the change which has come about. In reply a confused voice comes that a new awakening has come about putting an end to all forgetfulness.

Demogorgon then asks all the spirits residing in the creatures of nature and other objects—the beasts, birds, worms, fish, leaves, buds, meteors, etc. how they are feeling. The reply comes that the voice of Demogorgon is clearly audible.

Demogorgon now relates the significance of the change which has come about on earth. Man has became free. There are no despots and no slaves ; no one cheats, and no one is deceived. His life, which previously was a long tale of misery and agony from beginning to end, has been turned into happiness.

The spirits, want to hear further about these welcome changes. So Demogorgon continues announcing that despotism has been buried in the grave. No longer the conqueror will kill people and destroy their habitation. Love, which has been waiting patiently for centuries, has become the master of the situation.

The whole world is therefore enjoying the bliss conferred by Love. Her sweet companions—Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom and Endurance have come out of their hidden places, and through their effort the whole humanity has been emancipated and freed. They have created a spell by which all the evils have fled.

In the end Demogorgon announces the path which humanity has to follow to be happy and free. The people must suffer patiently from hardship which may seem to be eternal. They must forgive the wrongs done to them by others, even if they were very serious. They must not resist oppression and cruelty even if they too strong for them. They must love and endure the suffering imposed upon them. It is only in this manner that despair will turn into hope and a wonderful change will come about. On this path, humanity must persist and never falter in spite of many setbacks. This is the lesson which Prometheus has taught to humanity—to be always good, great and joyous, beautiful and free. It is only when humanity follows this path, that it can live the right type of life, experience real joy, win victory and build the empire based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

TO JANE : THE RECOLLECTION

I

Now the last day of many days,
    All beautiful and bright as thou,
        The loveliest and the last, is dead,
Rise, Memory, and write its praise !
    Up to thy wonted work ! come, trace
        The epitaph of glory fled,—
For now the Earth has changed its face,
    And frown is on the Heaven's brow.

II

We wandered to the Pine Forest
    That skirts the Ocean's foam,
The lightest wind was in its nest,
    The tempest in its home.
The whispering waves were half asleep,
    The clouds were gone to play,
And on the bosom of the deep
    The smile of Heaven lay ;
It seemed as if the hour were one
    Sent from beyond the skies,
Which scattered from above the sun
    A light of Paradise.

III

We paused amid the pines that stood
    The giants of the waste,
Tortured by storm to shapes as rude
    As serpents interlaced,
And soothed by every azure breath,

That under Heaven is blown,
To harmonies and hues beneath,
As tender as its own;
Now all the tree-tops lay asleep,
Like green waves on the sea,
And still as in the silent deep,
The ocean woods may be.

IV

How calm it was!—the silence there
By such a chain was bound
That even the busy woodpecker
Made stiller by her sound
The inviolable quietness;
The breath of peace we drew
With its soft motion made not less
The calm that round us grew.
There seemed from the remotest seat
Of the white mountain waste,
To the soft flower beneath our feet,
A magic circle traced,—
A spirit interfused around,
A thrilling, silent life,—
To momentary peace it bound
Our mortal nature's strife;
And still I felt the centre of
The magic circle there
Was one fair form that filled with love
The lifeless atmosphere.

V

We paused beneath the pools that lie
Under the forest bough,—
Each seemed as 'twere a little sky
Gulfed in a world below;

A firmament of purple light
Which in the dark earth lay,
More boundless than the depth of night,
And purer than the day—

In which the lovely forests grew,
As in the upper air,
More perfect both in shape and hue
Than any spreading there.
There lay the glade and neighbouring lawn,

And through the dark green wood
The white sun twinkling like the dawn
Out of a speckled cloud.
Sweet views which in our world above
Can never well be seen,

Were imaged by the water's love
Of that fair forest green.
And all was interfused beneath
With an Elysian glow,
An atomsphere without a breath,

A softer day below,
Like one beloved the scene had lent
To the dark water's breast,
Its every leaf and lineament
With more than truth expressed ;

Until an envious wind crept by,
Like an unwelcome thought,
Which from the mind's too faithful eye
Blots one dear image out.
Though thou art ever fair and kind,

The forests ever green,
Less oft is peace in Shelley's mind,
Than calm in waters seen.

NOTES

5. **wonted worked**—usual work.

5-6. **trace the epitaph of glory fled**—recount the splendour and greatness of the time that is past.

6. **epitaph**—inscription on a tomb.

7-8. **For now..........brow**—A change has come over the earth, and in the sky there is some kind of disturbance in the atmosphere.

10. **skirts**—surrounds.

12. **The tempest.........home**—The storm was at rest.

15. **bosom of the deed**—surface of the sea.

22. **the giants of the waste**—which stood like huge demons in the plane where nothing else was growing.

24. **interlaced**—intertwined.

25. **azure**—delicate blue.

27. **harmonies and hues**—music and colour.

37. **inviolable**—sacred; which should not be interrupted.

41. **remotest**—at the farthest distance.

42. **The white mountain waste**—The mountains of Carrara, which form the western range of Apennines between Pisa and Legborn.

45-48. There seemed to be a quiet, but exciting spirit prevailing there, which provided peace at least for a moment to the struggle which is constantly going on in human nature.

49-52. Shelley recollects that though all round there was a completely calm atmosphere, yet the presence of Jane filled it with love, and become the centre of magic circle which she had woven round her.

56. **gulfed**—made into a deep place.

57. **firmament**—sky.

59. **boundless**—limitless.

65. **glade**—an open space in the wood.

68. **speckled**—having small spots.

74. **Elysian glow**—heavenly light.

79. **lineament**—feature.

Critical Appreciation and Summary :

This poem was written by Shelley in 1822, and addressed to Clara Mary Jane Clairmont, step-sister of Mrs. Shelley. It was this girl, with whom Byron fell deeply in love, who was the companion of Shelley in his later wandering. *The Recollection* commemorates the day in the pine-forest near Pisa.

In the first stanza the poet says that the happiest day of their life, when he and wife were wandering with Jane through the forest, is gone for ever. In fact it was the last happiest and brightest day of his life, which will never return. It has become a mere part and parcel of memory.

It was a heavenly day, so beautiful and bright that it seemed as if it had descended from paradise. Everything ground them was so lovely, charming and peaceful. There was no trace of storm or any disturbing element. Therefore they all enjoyed it completely.

In the third stanza Shelley feels particularly attracted to the peace and harmony which prevailed there at that time. The music and colours were all enchantingly delicate. The whole atmosphere in the forest was as calm as the quiet, deep sea, when the waves seem to be asleep.

In the fourth stanza Shelley further describes the complete stillness which prevailed there. Everything around them was so calm and quiet that it made their hearts also

peaceful. But just as there is the soul of man which also throbs behind that outward peace that he enjoys, in the same manner behind that peaceful forest there seemed "the thrilling—silent life". The presence of Jane in that peaceful atmosphere was a source of great inspiration to the poet.

In the fifth stanza the poet describes the beauty of the small pools of water in which were clearly reflected the natural scenes which surrounded them. These reflections seemed limitless, pure and charming. In fact they were more pure and perfect than those actual scenes. The rays of the sun shining through a speckled cloud made the scene look still more charming and attractive. The whole atmosphere at time was heavenly, but it was disturbed by the blowing of the wind which seemed to envy their happiness. Shelley says that in the same manner the peace that Jane gives to his heart by her presence is often disturbed by some unwelcome thought.

HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY

I

The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen amongst us,—visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower—
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,

It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,—
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,—
Like memory of music fled,—

Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

II

Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form,—where art thou gone?

Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbow o'er yon mountain-river,
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,

Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom,—why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

III

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever

To sage or poet these responses given—
Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavour,
Frail spells—whose uttered charm might not avail to sever,
From all we hear and all we see,
Doubt, chance, and mutability.
Thy light alone—like mist o'er mountain driven,
Or music by the night-wind sent
Through strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

IV

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent,
Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
Thou messenger of sympathies,
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes—
Thou—that to human thought art nourishment,
Like darkness to a dying flame!
Depart not as thy shadow came.
Depart not—lest the grave should be,
Like life and fear, and dark reality.

V

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed;
I was not heard—I saw them not—
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds snd blossoming,—
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

VI

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine—have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave; they have in visioned bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night—
They know that never joy illumed my brow
Unliked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou—O awful loveliness,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

VII

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past—there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been;
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm—to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, spirit fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

NOTES

1. **awful**—fearful.

8. **countenance**—face.

13. **consecrate**—make holy.

19. **yon**—near.

24. **despondency**—despair.

25. **sublimer**—more dignified.

32. **mutability**—change.

44. **nourishment**—food.

49. **sped**—ran.

61. **dedicate**—offer.

63. **streaming**—weeping.

64. **phantoms**—ghosts.

73. **solemn and serene**—dignified and peaceful.

75. **lustre**—light.

Critical Appreciation and Summary :

Shelley wrote this poem in honour of Ideal Beauty, which is the power behind the universe. The underlying thought of the poem connected it with *Alastor* and *Epipsychidion* and *Prometheus Unbound* Referring to this Symonds has observed in his brook on Shelley : The deeper meaning of *Alastor* is to be found, not in the thought of death nor in the poet's recent communings with nature, but in the moto from St. Augustine placed upon its title page, and in the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty.* Enamoured of ideal loveliness, the poet pursues his vision though the universe, vainly hoping to assuage the thirst which has been stimulated in his spirit, and vainly longing for some mortal realisation of his love. *Alastor* like *Epipsychidion*, reveals the mistake which Shelley made in thinking that the idea of beauty could become incarnate for him in any earthly form; while the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* recognises the truth that such realisation of the ideal is impossible. The very last letter written by Shelley sets the misconception in its proper light. 'I think one is always in love with something or other; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps eternal''. But this Shelley discovered only with "the years that bring the philosophic mind' and when he was upon the very verge of his untimely death.''

There is an autobiographical element in this poem. To allude to his boyish incantations and nocturnal commerce with friends and phantoms would scarcely be needful, were it not that they seem to have deeply tinged his imagination. While describing the growth of his own genius in the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, he makes the following reference to circumstances which might otherwise be trivial :—

> Where yet a boy, I sought for ghosts, and sped
> Thro' many a listening chamber, cave, and ruin,
> And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing.
> Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
> I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed,
> I was not heard, I saw them not—
> When, musing deeply on the lot
> Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
> All vital things that wake to bring
> News of birds and blossoming,—
> Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
> I shrieked and clasped my hand in ecstasy.

"The essential thought expressed in this poem is that the universe is penetrated, vitalised, made real by a spirit, which he sometimes called the spirit of Nature, but which is always conceived as more than Life, as that which gives its actuality to Life, and lastly as Love and Beauty. To adore the spirit to clasp it with affection, and to blend with it, is, he thought, the true, object of man.

The same idea is embodied in Shelley's greatest work—*Prometheus Unbound*. There the final union of Prometheus with Asia is the consummation of human

destinies. Love was the only law Shelley recognised. Unterrified by the grim realities of pain and crime revealed in nature and society, he held fast to the belief that, if we could but pierce to the core of things, if we could but be what we might be, the world and man would attain to their perfection in eternal love. What resolution through some transcendental harmony was expected by Shelley for the palpable discords in the structure of the universe, we hardly know. He did not give his philosophic system form: and his new science of love remains a luminous poetic vision."

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. 1. Give a critical summary of *Ode to the West Wind* stanza by stanza.

Ans. Please consult pages 171 to 174.

Q. 2. Give a appreciation of *Ode to the West Wind*.

Ans. *Ode to the West Wind* is the most popular poem of Shelley, and is considered among half a dozen most popular poems in the English language. Shelley was a great lyricist, humanitarian, reformer, prophet and idealist. All these different aspects of Shelley are fully represented in this great poem. As a lyric, it gives a free and fluent expression to the upsurging emotions which arise in Shelley's heart as he looks at the swift current of the West Wind blowing ferociously over the earth, sky and the sea. As Shelley himself was tempestuous by temperament, the ferocity of the wind made a personal and direct appeal to him. He is filled with melancholy because he has lost that youthful vigour, but he believes that the wind help him spread his great thoughts over the world. From the beginning to the end Shelley seems to be composing this lyric with a breathless speed, giving adequate expression to his emotions. All these qualities make Ode to the West Wind one of the finest lyrics in the English language.

Shelley's zeal for reform has also been given a very fine expression in this poem. He wants that mankind should be awakened from slumber, and that the seeds of new ideas may be sown, which will blossom forth in the form of reforms which are urgently needed by humanity. Thus he wants the wind to spread his ideas over the world in order to quicken a new birth. The poem ends with a

prophecy that ultimately all will be well. The last stanza gives a fine expression to these ideas of reform and prophecy.

Be thou, Spirit fierce
My spirit ! Be thou me, impetuous one !
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth !
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished heart
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind !
Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy ! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ?

(*Note :—For full answer to this question please consult pages 12—17.*)

Q. 3. Give a critical summary of *To a Skylark.*

Ans. Please consult pages 187—193.

Q. 4. Write a note on *To a Skylark* **as a lyric.**

Ans. Shelley's *To a Skylark* is one of the finest lyries that he ever wrote, and one of the most popular in the English language· Any one conversant with English poetry must have read and enjoyed this lyric. The poet is especially attracted by sweet and spontaneous song of the bird which remains invisible in the sky. Just as the skylark pours forth its rapturous music in an unpremeditated manner, in the same manner Shelley composes this poem in a natural, effortless manner without the least strain on him. This effortless style is especially noticeable when Shelley pours forth simile after simile comparing the skylark to a poet, a high born maiden' a glow worm and a rose.

Besides the effortless, unpremeditated style and apt and original similes, there are profound thoughts concerning man's destiny in this world. The unenviable plight in

which man finds himself has been most aptly described in the following lines.

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not ;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught ;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought

The poet also suggests a solution to this problem, which is that man should emulate the skylark. He should have love for all human beings, and not be afraid of death :—

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear ;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

(Note :—For more material for answer to this question, please consult pages 33—37.)

Q. 5. What is the theme of the selection from ***Prometheus Unbound ?***

Ans. The theme of the selection from *Prometheus Unbound* is that in order to be happy and free humanity must tread a difficult path. The people must suffer patiently from hardships which may seem to be eternal. They must forgive the wrongs done to them by others, even if they were very serious. They must not resist oppression and cruelty even if they are too strong for them. It is only in this manner that despair will turn into hope, and a wonderful change will come about. It is only when humanity follows this path, that it can live the right type of life, experiences real joy, wins victory and builds the empire based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

Q. 6. Give a critical appreciation of the selection *Prometheus Unbound.*

Ans. Please consult pages 200—202.

Q. 7. Give a critical appreciation of the poem *To Jane : The Recollection.*

Ans. Please consult pages 207—208.

Q. 8. What is the theme of the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty.*

Ans. The theme of *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* is that the universe is penetrated, vitalised and made real by the spirit of Nature. To adore this spirit and to merge with it, is the true object of man.

Q. 9. Give a critical appreciation of *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty.*

Ans. Please consult pages 212—214.

APPENDIX I

Additional Notes

1. ODE TO THE WEST WIND

Introduction :

This poem was composed in 1819 when Shelley was living in Florence. It was conceived one day while the poet was out in the forest that skirts the Arno, near Florence. The occasion was that at sunset there began heavy autumnal rains followed by a violent tempest of hail and rain attended by magnificent thunder and lightning. It was this storm that inspired the poet to compose the great Ode which combines "lyrical breadth with lyrical intensity unsurpassed in English song."

1. **Breath............being**—what is breath to a living creature the West Wind is to Autumn. *i.e.,* the expiration of the Spirit of Autumn. Notice Shelley's myth making power.

2. **Unseen presence**—though invisible, its presence is felt through its voice and power.

3. **Like ghosts.........fleeing**—The wind is the magician by virtue of whose incantations the ghosts (the dry leaves) vanish mysteriously.

5. **Pestilence.........multitudes**—leaves have lost their natural colour under the scourage of a disease ; just as the complexion of a consumptive patient undergoes a change of colour, so does colour of leaves.

29. **Waken.........dreams**—disturb the summer calm of the Mediterranean, when the sea becomes rough as the West Wind starts blowing.

31. **Coil**—tumult.

Note :—Some annotators have explained 'coil' to mean a whirling round or circular motion. The scene being in an almost circular bay (Baiae bay) the currents of the Mediterranean are said to be coiled into it.—(Ellis).

35. **All overgrown**—Either (1) completely or wholly covered, or (2) all of them (palaces and towers) being overgrown.

45. **To pant......power**—That might be swept along so fast by your fury as to make me gasp for breath.

45-47. **Only less......uncontrollable**—The poet would yield to none in his impetuosity except by the West Wind—the embodiment of uncontrollable elemental forces in Nature.

58. **What if......own**—it does not matter in the least if the poet has lost his youthful vigour and elasticity of spirits.

63. **Drive... universe**—scatter away thoughts which have had no practical effects, like the yellow leaves of the autumn season.

2. TO A SKYLARK

Introduction :

This poem was written in 1820 at Leghorn (Italy). It was published in the same year in the "Prometheus Unbound" volume. The occasion was that while the poet and his wife were wandering along country-lanes lined with myrtle-hedges on which fire-flies glowed, they happened to

hear the song of a skylark. It was this song which led Shelley to compose the poem. The title really means "To the particular Skylark whose song I heard at Leghorn."

1. **Spirit**—a supernatural Being: you could never be a mere bird with a material body, subject to the limitations of human life on earth.

4. **Full**—overcharged.

5. **Art**—skill.

8. **Like a cloud of fire**—like tongues of flame moving in upward circles—like an angel mounting to heaven as a mass of flame and appearing as a distinct spot of colour in the radiance of sunlight.

Cf. Milton's "Paradise Lost"—"Satan springs upward like a pyramid of fire into the wild expanse."

15. **Whose............begun**—Who has just begun his existence as a spirit after having freed himself from his body.

18-20. Since no comma is placed after "in the broad daylight", the sense should be—just as a star remains invisible in the sky during the daytime when the sun is shining clearly, so also the lark which rises high up into the sky, is invisible even though the poet can hear its high-pitched notes of the song which expresses its spirit of joy.

21. **Arrows etc.**—sharp darting rays of the moon. In Graeco-Roman mythology both Apollo, the sun-god and Diana, the moon goddess, are archers. Hence the rays of the former and the beams of the latter are happily described as 'keen, piercing arrows of light.'

23. **Whose intense........narrows**—whose bright light grows dimmer.

25. **Until.........there**—but we feel that it (the silver sphere) is there (in the sky).

The shrill song of the invisible lark is like the piercing rays of a bright star that melts out of sight at dawn when we can scarcely see it though it still remains in the sky. Likewise, the shrill notes of the lark assure us of its presence to us, even though we cannot locate and see it.

27. **Loud**—full of sound which is being re-echoed.

29. **From one...cloud**—from behind the single patch of cloud in the sky which hides it but refracts its rays of light.

30. **The moon......overflowed**—The otherwise cloudless sky is overflooded with the refracted light of the moon hidden behind a solitary cloud.

31. **What............not**—whether you are a bird or a spirit.

32. **What thee ?**—What resembles you most closely.

33. **From the rainbow clouds**—These patches of clouds over which is projected the many-coloured rainbow.

34. **Drops**—rain-drops. **Bright**—lustrous (in reference to rain-drops).

35. **From thy presence**—from your unseen presence which is more like a spiritual influence than as a bodily form. **Showers**—falls as in a shower ; **Rain of melody**—a flood of harmony. The idea is—rain-drops reflecting the light of the sun thereby producing a rainbow, are not so lustrous as the song of the lark is cheerful, bringing to us the light of joy and hope to mankind on earth below.

36-40. Not knowing what the bird is like and being at a loss to find out something on earth with which it bears

closest resemblance, Shelley now tries to express what is 'most like the lark'.

In the first place he compares the lark to a poet on the basis of the following points of resemblance : (a) Just as the height to which the lark soars and the dazzling brilliance of the sun's rays prevent us from locating the lark, so also the sublimity and the illuminating thoughts of a poet stand in the way of our properly interpreting the poets' meaning. (b) The lark sings from near heaven and so is the poet's song which deals with lofty themes of great import. (c) Both the songs are spontaneous and are sung without effort and their art is unpremeditated (d) Just as the lark's song brings the light of joy and hope so also the poet rouses in us alternate hopes and fears as to the future of humanity.

36-37. **Hidden.........thought**—The dazzling brilliance and sublimity of the poet's thoughts prevent his readers from seeing his inmost self *i.e.*, they can hardly understand his meaning or interpretation or criticism of life.

40. **To............not**—The poet's thoughts instil new hopes and fears of the coming social order into men's minds and lead them on to adopt a revised standard of social values which they had not taken into account before.

41-45. The second near resemblance is suggested by a high-born maiden singing her song painfully burdened with love all alone from her private chamber. The point of comparison here too may be noted : (a) Both sing from a great height. (b) The lark is no mere bird encumbered with a material body but is a 'blithe spirit.' So is the maiden 'high-born'. (c) The lark loves but never knows love's satiety (line 80) and so is the maiden love-laden (d) Both sing alone. The lark fills the air with a flood of harmony and so does the maiden whose songs not only fill her private chamber but is also heard beyond.

46-50. The point of comparison of the lark's song with the light of the glow-worm is that the latter even when unseen makes the surrounding air luminous. So does the lark's song pour forth a flood of harmony on earth and air, all the while remaining invisible in the sky.

53. **Warm.........deflowered**—The rose is robbed of its bloom by moderately hot winds.

50-55. Though hidden behind leaves, the warm winds rob the rose of its sweet fragrance, behaving like thieves. But instead of getting away quickly with their spoils, they fly languidly on heavy wings, laden with perfume.

57. **On the.........grass**—glistening in the sun with rain-drops.

59-60. The music of your song gives us more joy than any of these things, *viz* : (1) The patter of rainfall refreshing parched earth, and (2) the beauty of flowers opening out their petals in the rain or looking refreshed after a shower.

64-65. **Praise............divine**—The lark's song also excels that of the most passionate lyrics in praise of love or wine (such as those of Horace, Sappo, Petrarch and others). The poet wants to know the subject-matter of the lark's song that can give the bird such a rapturous emotional exaltation in its full-throated melody.

70. **A thing ....want**—Compared to the lark's song, all those songs, *viz.*, marriage songs or odes celebrating victoris seem to have some undetected defect or imperfection—some harsh tone or discord or jarring note—a defect that is instinctively felt but is vague.

It is the poet's job to sharpen our sensibility—our vague sense of something lacking (though we cannot precisely point out what it is), and then satisfy this longing with his message or with images that stir up the feelings.

71-72. What are the objects which are the sources of inspiration of your song ?

73-74. Is it fields, waves or mountains ? Is it the different shapes or forms that the scenery of the sky or earth assumes ? Or is it love for all other birds and consequent ignorance of suffering ?

76-77. So pure and intense is the joy of the lark that it can never suffer from lassitude of spirit or weariness causing dejection. These two things can never co-exist.

80. The subject-matter of your song is love that has never known the least trace of weariness caused by gratification of appetite.

81. **Waking or asleep**—Whether you are awake or asleep or dreaming mystic dreams.

82. **Thou ...... dream**—You must have arrived at a truer conception of death than our present imperfect notions mystically which does not mar your happiness by fear of death, unlike us, human being.

90. *Cf.* A parallel idea in Kroener, the German poet, "The genuine song flows only from that human heart through which a deep sorrow glows."

91. **Yet**—although man is inferior to the lark as his joy is invariably tinged with some element of sorrow. **If**—even if.

92. **Hate ....fear**—even if man could rise above hate, pride and fear, just like the lark, man could hardly aspire to its rapturous joy.

96-97. **Better . ... sound**—Knowledge of different rhythmic form of music.

98-100. **Treasures etc.**—stores of learning to be found in books : The sense is : "If poets could emulate the lark by rising above the limitations of earthly existence, they could feel an undiluted or unalloyed bliss. If they could imbibe this gift from the lark, they could more profitably use their knowledge of different forms of musical rhythm or all their much-vaunted book-learning."

101-105. If only Shelley could be half as happy as the lark, he would be divinely inspired to write such poetry in a fit of delirious rapture that the whole world would listen to him spell-bound.

3. FORM "PROMETHEUS UNBOUND"

1-4. This is Demogorgon's address to all forms of creation.

16-17. The meaning seems to be this :—Even the beams of verse are obscure, instead of revealing your state.

18. **Whether your nature etc.**—"Either they are absorbed into the Universe of Spirit and so continue to be cognizable by mortal men, or the state of physical change natural to men when alive is natural to them also when dead, and then the dead change pass away, and *qua* men, absolutely cease to exist"—(Rossetti.)

This is Shelley's conception of a Universal Soul in which and from which all individual spirits are and to which they are gathered up at death. This soul is the sustainer of the Universe, and Shelley sometimes speaks of it as visiting all things with refreshment and joy, and sometimes as being itself the principle of life in all things. In so far as it enters into sensuous existence it is mixed with the principle of Evil, the retarding and dimming principle ; for Nature, even when it is entirely attained to the Divine, will still be a clog to it and to the spirits of men in some degree (*Cf.* Prometheus Unbound,

III. iv. 200). After death the human soul, returning to that fountain of life, may bear its part in animating the world...In his "Adonais" Shelley forgets the splendid and sufficient figure of life as the prismatic hues thrown on a pavement from a dome of stained glass until death tramples it to fragments.

Cf. Also "Adonais" XLIII. The Spirit of Nature is not only Love but also Beauty. It is this spirit which is operating in men and beasts and trees and there is beauty bursting forth from them, proportionately to the character of each and filling the earth and heaven.

41-44. A crag on the edge of a precipice keeps its hold in agony and terror.

49. 'Mankind may relapse and the struggle against evil may have to be renewed. This serpent (good) has gained the victory, but it may not be able to keep a secure hold on eternity.'

Most probably Shelley is here making use of the symbolism of the Gnostic Ophites. The snake's attraction to Shelley consists in its solitary and mysterious life. He speaks of the inevitability of the coils of the snake as it fastens on Jove like the serpents on Laocoon.

Two angels are represented in serpent form *viz.* (1) 'The angel of Darkness, the creeping, cunning Demon who gave men the law which binds and the letter which kills, and (2) the angel of knowledge and Light."

Sometimes Shelley regards the serpent with horror and sometimes with love. According to the philosophy of esoteric knowledge of the Gnostic Ophites the snake is the symbol of knowledge—the redeeming and savings principle in Man.

53. The liberation of man is possible only from "resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope, and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue."

TO JANE : THE RECOLLECTION

Introduction :

This as well as the "Invitation" was written in 1822 as one piece and was published in their original title (The Pine Forest of the Cascine near Pisa). They were first printed separately and given two different titles *viz*. To Jane : The Invitation and To Jane : The Recollection.

This poem is a recollection of bright and beautiful days the poet passed during his pleasant excursions with his lady friend, Mrs. Jane Williams.

2. **Thou**—Mrs. Jane Williams, the lady friend of Shelley.

3. **Dead**—gone by:

5. Recall the happy past to your memory and sing its praises.

8. **And frown.........brow**—The sky looks threatening and a storm may burst at any moment.

10. The forest stretching along the outskirts of the foamy beach of the Ligurian sea.

11. **Nest**—place of rest.

12. **In its home**—resting *i. e.* was not yet a stir.

16. **The smile of Heaven**—bright light of the sun.

20. **A light of Paradise**—a celestial glow.

21. Violent storms have twisted the pine trees out of shape.

27. Though violent storms distort and twist the pine trees, gentle winds serve to sooth their bower branches, stems and twigs.

34. **By such a chain**—silence is conceived as a captive in chains meaning that perfect silence reigned there.

37. **Inviolable etc.**—a quietness which is too sacred to be liable to be disturbed.

44. **A magic circle**—the area marked out by a magician as under enchantment.

45. Here the universal spirit is of sympathetic love. *Cf.* 'Epipsychidion' and the last few lines of 'Lines Written among the Euganean Hills'.

46. "*Cf.* lines 47-48 and "Tintern Abbey" :

> "Until, the breath of this corporal frame,
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid, asleep
> In body, and become a living soul."

51. **One fair form**—The beautiful figure of Mrs. Williams.

52. **Lifeless etc.**—Love is the ultimate principle behind the Spirit of Nature which governs the whole Universe. She seemed to be within the centre of the magic circle—the very embodiment of the Spirit of Love.

59-60. With greater depth in the downward direction than the blue sky seemed to have in the upward direction at night. Shelley here describes the scenes reflected in the surface of the pools of water.

68. **Speckled cloud**—patches of cloud having coloured spots.

87-88. Even though Nature is charming and his lady friend was lovely and kind to him, he rarely enjoys his peace of mind.

HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY

Date :

This poem was written in the summer of 1816 when Shelley and Mary Godwin were having a holiday on the shores of Lake Leman. It was inspired by his study of Plato. The poet had already translated Plato's "Symposium" in 1818—It confirms the poet's adherence to Platonic principles of the Good, the Beautiful and the True.

1. **Awful shadow etc.**—The Universal Soul of Plato's philosophy. "The Spirit of Beauty and Good interfused with the things of sense, with the sullen matter of nature or the carnal element in man, moulds them as "each mass may bear" to its own likeness ; sometimes prevails upon them "in its glory and in its night ; sometimes seems to weary or fail"—(Hughes.)

Cf. the lyric, "Life of Life" (Prom, Unb., II. v. 48-71).

2. **Floats............us**—pervades our life without our knowledge.

3. **This various world**—the world of changeful phenomena. **With as inconstant wing**—fitfully and in an unwieldy manner.

4. **As summer......... . flower**—The Universe is visited fitfully by this spirit somewhat like the summer wind blowing in gusts through flowers.

5. **Shower**—shedding or pouring forth its silvery white rays of light through the pine forests on high mountain sides.

6-7. **It.........countenance**—It visits the heart of man and his face.

8-9. **Like............spread**—like patches of fleecy cloud scattered all over the sky in a moonlit night.

10. **Like.........fled**—A favourite image of Shelley common among his love-lyrics.

11-12. **Like......... mystery**—like all those things endeared to the heart of man for their beauty, strangeness and mystery.

13. **Consecrate**—sanctify or give a sacred touch.

14-15. **All...............form**—all thoughts or things or objects.

16. **State**—life.

17. **This.........desolate**—life is basically a dark valley of tears. Note Shelley's pessimism, **Vacant**—unmeaning. **Desolate**—lonely. *Cf.* 'Adonais'. LIV.

18-19. **Ask why............ ...mountain-river**—why is it that a thing of beauty like the lovely rainbow appearing as a heavenly bridge over a mountain-river is seen very rarely and not for all times ?

21-24. **Why fear...hope ?**—In Shelley's view these are the evils of human life which make for imperfection in man. They will all be a thing of the past when Love and Beauty will reign supreme on earth. *Cf.* "Prom. Unbound", I. iv. Human life is at present imperfect because Love alternates

with Hate (Hate must be conquered by Love as in "Prometheus") and our hopes are unfulfilled.

27. **Demon**—Shelley's demons are divine agencies influencing the trend of human affairs.

31. **Doubt etc.**—evils of human life as at present conditioned. The Spirit of Beauty will be the penacea for the diverse ills of life. This Spirit of Beauty is synonymous with the Spirit of Love and Liberty.

49-60. This stanza records Shelley's childhood experiences. This is the autobiographical element in the poem which recods the growth of his gradual belief in the eternal Platonic principles.

69-70. This is the subject of "Prometheus Unbound", Shelley's drama, which gives lyrical expression of man's faith in ultimate moral, political and intellectual freedom and the triumph of the human spirit. True liberty inheres in the soul but before it is operative in human actions, the mind of man must be purged and filled with love not only of one's fellow men, but also of all those ideas summed up by Plato as the Good, the Beautiful, the True.

78-81. This hope of Shelley was not unforunately realized. *Cf.* "To Jane : The Recollection" :

> "Less oft its peace in Shelley's mind,
> Than calm in waters, seen."

Vide Notes on "**To Jane**" *ante.*

APPENDIX II

Additional Questions and Answers

1. ODE TO THE WEST WIND

Q. 3. Point out the leading characteristics of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" and form a literary estimate of the poem. (*C. U., 1920, 1921*).

Q. 4. In what respects may the poem be considered as a representative piece of the poet. (*C. U., B. A. Hons. 1928*). What characteristics of the poet are revealed in the poem ? (*C. U., 1922*).

Or

Discuss the poem as representative of Shelley's genius. (*C. U., Hons., 1921*).

Q. 5. Give the central thought or substance of the poem (*C. U., 1920, 1922*).

Or

Give an analysis of the "Ode to the West Wind." (*C. U., 1937*).

Ans. Questions 3 & 5.

(A) The Wind in its action ; (*a*) on land, (*b*) in the sky, and (*c*) at sea.

(*a*) *On land* the West Wind plays a dual role of preserving and destroying vegetation. It not only sweeps away the dead leaves of autumn but also sows the seeds broadcast in the ground out of which fresh vegetation is reborn in spring.

(*b*) *In the sky* the West Wind scatters the loose clouds drives before it thin, stray storm-clouds that fly out on the eve of a storm as they spread from the horizon to the Zenith and laments the passing of the outgoing year when clouds form a solid mass, out of which descend thunder, rain, hail and lightning.

(*c*) *At sea* the West Wind ruffles up the surface of the calm and transparent waters of the Maditerranean, reflecting the submerged palaces and towers of Baiae and lashes up the Atlantic into long lines of rollers, disclosing troughs in between. The submarine flowers are frightened at its approach. They grow grey and shed some of their vegetation.

(B) The poet's personal appeal to the West Wind to give him some of its elemental strength to enable him to declare his message for humanity.

The poet regrets that he is not one of those natural objects (like a leaf, a cloud and a wave) to share the impulsive force of the wind. He has lost much of the strength and force of his boyhood. But he was like the wind 'tameless, and swift and proud'. He is in sore need of help from the Wind. Life has been a bitter experience. Its burdens and conventions are out to crush him.

He would now make a personal appeal to the West Wind. The wind makes a grand music as it rushes through the meshes of leaves of trees in the forest. The poet would like the Wind to make him its medium of expression—its lyre so that it may help to scatter his dead thoughts and give birth to new ideas and ideals that would regenerate human society and bring about a new social order of peace, freedom and happiness. The poet is very hopeful for, since winter of suffering had already come, the spring of human happiness could not be very far away.

Ans. Questions 3 & 4.

Literary estimate and As a representative Poem.

(1) It is instinct with the sublimest flights of his imagination. It is the most rapturous of his lyrics. It combines imaginative conception and metrical power at the sublimest level from beginning to end a 'lyric' is a poem of personal emotion and if impressiveness is the crucial test of art, then there is no greater lyric in the English language.

"The personal cry of suffering and exultation and hope of rapture and regret and faith, which thrills the matchless music of the verse, as with the very throb of living blood serves only to quicken and to deepen the effect of the sensuous and supersensual emotion impressed by the glory of Nature when, most joyous and expressed in the splendour of song when most sublime"—(Swinburne).

There is complete identification of the poet with his subject-matter—with the poet's emotional nature and his "tameless and swift and proud" spirit—in that the poet finds in the wild West Wind a cognate spirit. The complete identification of the poet with the theme gives rise to the desire to put to rights the present set-up of human society, weighed down and crushed under the oppressive burden of meaningless conventions and restraints. From his very youth the poet has been a rebel and his brain is full of revolutionary fervour to reform society and declare his message of the advent of the millennium. "Shelley bids the West Wind become his mouthpiece and awaken entranced humanity to a vindication of its birth-right of liberty and equality announcing to it that the millennium is not far-off."

(2) The lyric combines with the highest degree of imaginative power with two other characteristic notes of Shelley, *viz.* (i) personal despondency, and (ii) his passion

for prophecy by holding out before humanity the picture of a millennium, which latter is by no means personal but embraces the woes of suffering humanity. The faltering accents with which the poet speaks out, assume the trumpet-notes of a prophet. "The dead leaf lifted by the wind becomes the lyre which awakens in it a tumult of mighty harmonies to quicken the sleeping world to new birth."

(3) "The urgent rhythmic sweep of the verse finely suggests the wild West Wind, and the frequency of the run-on lines carries the movement triumphantly from line to line. The many similes of the poem are not mere decorative imagery, but apt and compelling comparisons."—(Williams) "The verse sweeps along with the elemental rush of the wind it celebrates. Metaphor succeeds metaphor, simile to simile with rapidity, but, thought at first reading it is hardly possible to keep pace with the swift kaleidoscopic changes, there is none of the hazy indistinctness that is apt to mar the same poet's less perfect work." The myth-making capacity of the poet is also seen in its perfection. The poem ends with a note of optimism.

(4) The influence of Greek art is also seen in the artistic restraint and perfect artistic execution. "It is distinguished by no dazzling gorgeousness of phrase ; the epithets are few, simple, and austere. There is perfect economy of phrase, arrived at through selection, self-control and self-criticism. Thus it is that we see in this Ode the marriage of the most exquisite words to the most exquisite harmonies. The result of the union is an unrivalled suggestiveness of phrase which gives every image a thousand different faces and is absolutely limitless in extent."

2. TO A SKYLARK

Q. 1. Give an analysis of Shelley's poem 'To a Skylark' (*C. U., 1936*), and point out some of the special characteristics of the poet as revealed in it.

Q. 2. What is the central thought of the poem ?

Q. 3. Give the substance of the poem.

Ans. Question 1. *Analysis.*

1. Description of the lark and its singing in the sky (Stanzas 1-7).

The skylark pours forth from the lofty heights of the sky a flood of spontaneous harmony. It is more a spirit of joy that a mere bird. Singing like a cloud of fire it climbs higher and higher in the sky, beginning its flight at peep of dawn. In the evening it becomes a sightless song, like a star in daylight. Its presence is felt rather than seen. Its song is like a flood of light poured forth from the moon hidden behind a lonely cloud at night—The poet does not understand the true nature of the bird. He wonders how he can most profitably compare its song with things to which it resembles most closely. He thinks he can compare the song of the bird to the bright raindrops from rainbowed clouds, which are not as lustrous as the song of the lark is cheerful and full of hope.

2. Four similes illustrative of the song of the lark (8-11).

Perhaps the song of the sightless bird may be compared, (*a*) to a poet hidden in the light of thought, or (*b*) to a high-born maiden singing her song alone to soothe her love-lorn heart from her private chamber in her palace tower at dead of night, or (*c*) to a glow-worm making the surrounding air luminous even when unseen, or (d) to a rose embowered in green leaves and blown full by the wind which scatters its fragrance all around.

3. Superiority of the lark's song to similar efforts of human beings (12-14)

It is more pleasing than the sound of spring showers, the beauty of flowers—nay anything joyous or fresh or clear

that we know. It is superior to marriage song or odes celebrating victories, all of which have some defect or other compared to the song of the lark which is flawless.

4. Source of the lark's inspiration (15-17). Man's sadness compared and contrasted with lark's joy (18-20).

It is singularly from a touch of sadness. It knows nothing of satiety which spoils human happiness............It knows no regret for the past or vague longing for the future. It has a truer conception of death, which has no terror for him ; otherwise its song could not be so joyous or clear. Compared to the lark even the very best of our song has some element of sorrow. "Even if we could be without hate, pride, fear, and sorrow, we cannot conceive our reaching such joy as the lark's song shows."

5. The poet's wishes to be taught half the gladness (21).

It is upto the bird to teach the poet half the gladness to enable him to sing so sweetly that the whole world would listen to him spell-bound.

Characteristics : (1) His lyricism is incomparable. Never was a poet so spontaneously lyrical in freshness of conception, felicitous phrases, rich imagery, emotional abandon and imaginative flight. By his imagination the poet has etherealised the bird from a thing of flesh and blood into an unbodied joy, and has found in the glow and rapture of the lark's song a type of his own yearning.

(2) Other lyric poets sing of what they feel but Shelley sings of what he wants to feel—something sought after but yet unattained some passionate desire for ideal beauty. He feels he has a message for the world—a message that would regenerate it. His outlook is gloomy in that he looks before and after and pines for what is not. He is always for transporting himself into a world of fancy, as

his aim was to rise like the skylark, higher still and higher from the earth. He wished to have some of the lark's unalloyed happiness so that a rapt world might listen to him. There is a kind of super-terrestrial quality in the upward flight, the soaring height as well as the poignant intensity of the sounds that fall from the quivering beak of the skylark. With his lofty idealism Shelley sees through and beyond the beauty of Nature. The poem is full of dazzling images. 'If greatness in poetry consisted of succession of dazzling images and a rapid flow of splendid verse, Shelley would be entitled to almost the first place in English literature. The musical quality of the verse is such that its rhythm attempts to reproduce the melody of the skylark's song.

Ans. 2. The poet institutes a contrast between the life of the bird and human life. He deeply regrets that man should have been denied the fullness of joy, love and wisdom which are at the back of the lark's rapturous song.

A deep under-current note of regret runs through the poem and lends a pathos to the joyous song of the lark. Both these notes are vital parts of the poet's thought-structure. It is only if the lark belongs wholly to heaven, being a scorner of the ground and only if its joy is free from the taint of material things, that the poet wishes to receive his baptism of gladness from it so that he may sing a song that will entrance the whole world.

The contrast is thus made out : The life of the lark is full of joy whereas man is troubled with a vague discontent. The lark's love knows no surfeit. It has a clear conception of the mystery of death and of the miseries of life. Even if man is free from fear he could never approach the joy of the lark. He is always haunted by the fear of death.

If he had half the gladness of the lark, he would hold his readers spell-bound with his song.

Ans. 3. See Analysis,

3. FROM 'PROMETHEUS UNBOUND'

Q. 1. Summarise Shelley's prophecy of the new world put in the mouth of Demogorgon in the 4th Act of "Prometheus Unbound."

Ans. See summary pages 200-202.

Q. 2. Write a short critical appreciation of the extract.

Ans. See "Critical Appreciation", pages 132-135 *ante*.

Act IV of the lyrical drama presents the union of Prometheus with Asia after his liberation from tyranny. Earth also exults at man's release from tyranny and, above all, at man's transformation through Love. Demogorgon, the Primal Spirit, now rises and addresses himself (after the Earth and Moon have finished their duet), to the widest possible audience—to the Earth, the Moon, Kings of suns and stars, Daemons and Gods, to 'Ye happy dead', to the chemical elements, to 'spirits whose homes are flesh', beasts and birds, worms and fish, leaves and buds, lightning and wind, and last of all, to man who was

"Once a despot and a slave ;
A dupe and a deceiver ; decay ;
A traveller from the cradle to the grave.
Through the dim night of this immortal day."

He announces man's victory over evil, and asserts the only means by which it can be preserved or regained, should the necessity arise. The overthrown tyranny may have a fresh lease of life, if men degenerate in mind and ideals ; for men will get the world they really deserve because true freedom cannot under any circumstances co-exist with hatred and revenge.

"In 'Prometheus Unbound' Shelley succeeds in working his moral, political and philosophical ideals into a well-knit poetic theme. Act IV is simply unique in English poetry for its intimate blend of exact science and dazzling verse, its sustained animation and exultation and its pervading philosophy of unity in Nature. It is creative myth of a high order, a reminder that Shelley was the most spontaneous of myth-makers and the most scientifically-minded poet of the age." It is indeed "the greatest expression ever given to humanity's desire for intellectual and spiritual liberty."

4. TO JANE : THE RECOLLECTION

Q. 1. Give the substance of Shelley's Recollection. (*C. U. B. A., 1924, 25, 28*)

Ans. The poem is a record of the last of the many happy days, beautiful and bright, that Shelley passed in the pleasant company of his lady friend Mrs. Jane Williams in the pine forest of the Cascine near Pisa.

The air was hushed into silence and calm, and the sky was cloudless. Surface of the sea was lit up by the sun and the gentle murmur of the waves could be distinctly heard. The hour was indeed heavenly. The pine trees were twisted out of shape by strong gusts of wind in the winter. Now the pine branches were motionless. The entire land-scape and the seascape were under the spell of a holy calm. In the centre of the magic circle was Mrs. Williams. Together they wandered to that part of the forest where the trees, the sky and the whole forest—all were reflected in the pools of still water. Suddenly the wind ruffled the surface so that all the images reflected with such celestial beauty vanished. Although his lady-friend was ever kind to him, there was little peace in the mind of the poet.

Q. 2. Write a note on its 'critical appreciation'. What characteristic qualities of Shelley's poetry are to be found in it ?

Ans. See pages 207-208 *ante*.

"This is perhaps the most serene of Shelley's poems. The windless weather is so fused with Jane's soothing and calming influence that we sometimes forget which is which. The gentle, rather monotonous beat of the metre and the careful pictures of Nature seem to imply that nothing will ever change from now till eternity. The poem ends with a flash of self-analysis, and a tacit tribute to Jane's soothing power." The poem is also remarkable for its Wordsworthian influence in 'The thrilling silent life' of Nature interpreted with something like Wordsworth's unique power of capturing and suggesting this mystic communion with Nature. It also gives expression to the spirit of unrest and the hunger of his heart for peace and happiness, which was not his.

5. HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY

Q. 1. Give the central idea of the poem.

Or

Write a note on Shelley's conception of Beauty expressed in the poem.

Ans. After finishing 'Queen Mab' and 'The Revolt of Islam', Shelley was slowly discarding his belief in the Godwinian gospel of Necessity for his Platonic theory, *viz.*, that if mankind would fall in love with 'intellectual beauty their hearts and minds would soon undergo a transformation and they would all be raised above the imperfections of life. This is the theme that touches and recurs all his subsequent writings. Thus the Platonic lover would prefer Beauty (which is eternal truth) to Beauty in any visible form (human or artistic). Keats was also a believer in and worshipper of Beauty but his idea of Beauty is different from those of Shelley who believed, like Plato, in the thesis that 'The Universe is penetrated, vitalised and made real by a Spirit which is sometimes called the Spirit of Nature, but which he always conceives as more than life, as that which gives its actuality to life, and lastly, as Love and Beauty. This is the idea of Beauty incarnate—the

shadow of the Light of Life which sustains the world and enkindles it with love, the reality of Alastor's vision, the breathing image of the awful loveliness opostraphised in the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty'', the reflex of the, splendour of which Adonais was a part''.—(Symonds). This guiding power emerges later on in various guises, often coloured by a strong element of pantheism in his poetry : (1) as the 'Being robed in glory of "Epipsy chidion'', (2) as the One Eternal Spirit (which is in Nature and is a shaping or plastic Spirit gradually moulding men to pursue the ideal through Love and Beauty) of 'Adonais', and (3) the 'Shape all Light' of the 'Triumph of Life'.

Intellectual Beauty is beauty of the mind of the soul or incorporeal beauty, as opposed to physical beauty it tangible forms—the archetypal beauty *i.e.*, the primal source of every other form of Beauty, as embodied somewhere beyond this material world in the other half of man's soul. To adore this spirit, to clasp it with affection and to blend with it "is the consummation to which humanity has been striving for ages.'' Shelley has also been pursuing this vision incessantly from his earliest years but so far he has been able to catch occasional glimpses of it. At last he realized that this spirit of Beauty is not to be realizable here on this earth.

Q. 2. Write a critical appreciation of the poem.

Ans. See pages 212-214.

Q. 3. Give the substance of the poem.

Ans. In this "Hymn'', Shelley addresses the awful shadow of some unseen power, which "visits with inconstant wing'' the world of Nature and each human heart and countenance, which "consecrates every thought or form on which it shines but anon hides itself and leaves this dim vast vale of tears vacant and desolate.''

In this poem Shelley gives expression to his conception of Beauty which is but the reflex of some unseen Power which penetrates and vitalises Nature and Man. It is fitful like the summer wind blowing over flowers, in its visits to the world of Nature and Man. The mind of man is touched only intermittently. It is subject to an ebb and flow, withdrawing at times only to reappear in some other form playing an eternal game of hide and seek. It is difficult for man to realise it and yet to cling to this Spirit seems to be man's highest objective.

Like the poet in "Alastor", Shelley pursued this mirage of ideal beauty in all things but was unable to realise it through sense-experience. Ideal Beauty is not to be found in a world which is but a vale of tears. With the passing away of Beauty evils, such as, hate and despondency rule our lives and victimise us.

APPENDIX III

University Explanations And Annotations

1. Oh, lift me as a wave......proud.

(Ode to West Wind, *ll. 53-56.*)

The poet is in dire need of help in his utter helplessness. Life has been a cruel experience to him—an unsupportable burden which has crushed his once elastic spirits and pride. The poet wants the West Wind to impart some of its energy. There is an affinity between his soul and the storm—Like the West Wind he was once untamed, impulsive and defiant, but all his energies have been sapped by the weight of his miseries and by his struggles with society. This is the lyrical cry of the poet wrung out of the depths of his soul.

2. Make me thy lyre... . new birth !

(Ode to West Wind, *ll. 57-64.*)

The poet makes an impassioned appeal to the West Wind to treat him as it treats the forest and make him the instrument of expression so that all his dead thoughts may be scattered and new ideas may be sown broadest for bringing into existence a new order of things for a regenerate humanity. He invokes the elemental energy of the West Wind to draw out from his mind all the music lying latent in him just as the wind produces a grand music out of the leaf meshes of the autumnal forest.

3. We look before......thought.

(To a Skylark, *ll. 86-90.*)

The song of the Skylark is perfect music interpenetrated through and through with a keen sense of joyousness.

Human songs, on the other hand, have invariably an undertone of sadness, an undefinable flow and a discordant note. The sweetest songs of men are those that tell of saddest thoughts. Our tragic songs are sweeter than comic ones. Man in never contented with his lot on earth—Either he looks at his past with a vain regret or at his future for a state of ideal bliss which will never be his. There is an element of sadness even in the most intense pleasure that may happen to enjoy in a happy interlude in the general drama of pain and suffering.

4. Sweet views which in our......Elysian glow.

(To Jane : The Recollection, *ll. 69-74.*)

This is how Shelley records his impressions of the charming scenery of the pine forest where he spent a happy day in the sweet company of his lady friend, Mrs. Jane Williams. In the heart of the forest they found Nature hushed into silence. The pine-trees were motionless and an absolute calm reigned all around. It seemed as if his lady-friend stood in the very centre of a magic circle. Proceeding further, Shelley observed an indescribably beautiful scene in another part of the forest. Here the entire scene, the trees, the purple sky, the glades, and the entire panorama of natural objects—were all reflected in a pool of still water, which seemed to retain the lovely images in its surface. All these reflections on the still water of the pool were permeated with a heavenly beauty, the counterpart of which was indeed very difficult to find on earth.

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CHRONOLOGY

1792. August 4, born at Field Place, Warnham, near Horsham, Sussex.

1802-04. At school, Sion House, near Brentford.

1804-10. At Eton college. Known as "Mad Shelley", writes and publishes a 'Terror' romance and in collaboration with his sister 'Original Poetry' by Victor and Cazire.

1810-11. At University College, Oxford. Writes a second romance. Expelled for 'contumacy' in connection with the publication of his pamphlet 'The Necessity of Atheism'.

1811. Marries Harriet West-book (aged sixteen).

1812. Visits Ireland and distributes his address to the Irish people, urging Catholic Emanicipation and repeal of the Union.

1813. "Queen Mab" published. Friendship with T. L. Peacock begun.

1814. Deserts Harriet and elopes with Mary Wolstonecraft Godwin (aged seventeen) to Switzerland. Returns England.

1815. Inherits a substantial income on the death of his grand-father. Writes 'Alastor'.

1816. May-September, Switzerland again and friend-ship with Lord Byron. November, Harriet's suicide. December, married Mary Godwin.

1817. Deprived of Harriet's children by order of the Court of Chancery. Writes 'The Revolt of Islam'. Mary Shelley's 'Frakenstein' completed.

1818. Leaves England for Italy, Pisa, Leghorn, the Baths of Lucca, Venice, Este. Translates Plato's "Symposium". Writes "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills", "Julian and Maddalo" and almost the whole of Act I of "Prometheus Unbound", Rome : Naples.

1819. Rome ; completes Acts II and III of "Prometheus Unbound" and the "Cenci" ; Florence ; Act IV of "Prometheus Unbound."

1820. Pisa, Leghorn. 'The Witch of Atlas', Adonais', 'Hellas'.

1822. Arrival of J. E. Treelawny. Move to Casa Mangi in the Bay of Spezzia near Levice. Begins the "Triumph of Life" July 8 : Drowned at sea with Williams, white returning from Leghorn.